

WORK AND WIN

An Interesting Weekly for Young America.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, by Frank Tousey.

No. 79.

NEW YORK, JUNE 8, 1900.

Price 5 Cents.

FRED FEARNOT AS A SHERIFF;

OR

BREAKING UP A DESPERATE GANG.

BY HAL STANDISH.



"This is pretty bad business, men," Fred called to them. "I'm sorry it happened, but you made the mistake of resisting the law."

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NOW FORM YOUR CLUBS!

Make the Motto "Work and Win" a By-word throughout this whole country

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CHAPTER I.

FRED AND TERRY PLAN A TRIP TO RANCHMAN'S REST.

A few days after their return to their ranch from Texas, where Fred Fearnot and Terry Olcott had been in search of a man named Bussy, Nick Taylor came over on a visit, and brought the news that one of his cowboys had been seriously wounded the Sunday before by one of a gang of desperadoes down at Ranchman's Rest.

"Sorry to hear that, Nick," said Fred. "Where is he now?"

"Why, he's at the tavern there, too badly hurt to be moved, and the doctor says it will probably be a month before we can get him back to the ranch."

"How did it happen? Was he drinking?"

"No, but the other fellows were."

"Where were those fellows from?"

"I don't know. They are from everywhere. They claim to be cattle punchers, but for a number of weeks past they've been making headquarters there, coming and going, drinking, gambling and playing the deuce generally, until it is no longer a safe place for a decent man to go to."

"How about the dances we used to have there on Saturday nights?" Terry asked.

"The last three were broken up by their fighting and shooting, and now ranchmen refuse to take their women folks there any more."

"Well, that's too bad," said Terry. "It's the only place where our ranchmen could go for a bit of fun."

"Yes, it's rather hard on the women," assented Taylor, "for now they have to have their little dances at their homes, and it's very inconvenient on account of the lack of room."

"Yes, I should think so. Why doesn't the landlord of the tavern put a stop to that sort of thing?"

"He can't do it. They are too many for him. There

must be upwards of two score of them, and the last time I saw him he told me he didn't believe that any of them were straight, honest fellows. The stage coach was robbed two weeks ago, about forty miles south of him, and he thinks that some of them had a hand in it. They all seem to have money, and a number of them claim that they are speculating in cattle."

"Say, Nick," said Fred, "have any of the ranchers been missing cattle lately?"

"Oh! yes; there's always a certain percentage comes up missing, you know, but it doesn't seem to be above the average at present."

"What's the matter with the sheriff? Why doesn't he look after those fellows?" Terry asked.

"It's a hard matter to look after everything going on in a county the size of this. It's a pretty big one, you know; besides he lives twenty miles away."

"Well, let's get him to come down to Ranchman's Rest and stop a week or so there," Fred suggested. "His presence would put them on their good behavior."

"Yes, but he couldn't stay there all the time. As soon as he left they'd begin their deviltry again; besides he couldn't interfere with them unless he saw them violating the law, or had warrants for the arrest of some of them."

"Yes, very true. Can't we get warrants for the arrest of those who have been making so much mischief?"

"I don't know. A man's got to swear out a warrant based upon his knowledge of some wrong that has been done."

"Well, what's the matter with your man, who is lying there wounded, swearing out a warrant for the fellow who shot him?"

"I've been thinking about that," replied Nick, "and as soon as he's able to get up I'm going to have him do so."

"What's the use of waiting for him to get up? Why not go down there and find out who the fellow is who shot him, and apply for a warrant for his arrest?"

"The truth is, Fred, I'm so busy just now that I can't attend to it; but if you'll go down there with me I'll take a day or two off no matter how much I may lose by it."

"I'll go with you," said Terry. "We are not tied down to our ranch here, as Wicklow is running it to suit us."

"Yes, you are better off than I am," returned Taylor. "I am my own superintendent, and it keeps me pretty busy all the time."

"When can you go down there, Nick?" Fred asked.

"I can go down to-morrow."

"All right, then. We'll leave here at sunrise. You leave your place at the same time and we'll meet at the tavern. You want to bring your Winchester along with you, too."

"Yes, of course."

Nick returned to his ranch and Fred and Terry prepared for the visit to Ranchman's Rest the next morning.

About an hour after he left, Joe Griswold, accompanied by his wife and two sisters, rode up on horseback.

Of course, Fred and Terry gave them a cordial reception. They assisted the girls to alight, complimented them on their good looks, and sent them into the house.

"Fred," said Joe Griswold, "we heard day before yester-

day that you and Terry had returned, and came over to invite you to join us in a trip up the river to visit a family that have settled on a ranch which they bought from the Banks crowd."

"Thank you," said Fred, "we'll be glad to do so. What has become of Banks and his crowd?"

"Oh! they've gone down the river some thirty miles below here."

"Good riddance! Glad to hear it."

"Yes, we were glad to get rid of them; but from all I hear they are making a good deal of trouble where they have gone. They are nearer Ranchman's Rest now, and frequently show up there, where they drink, carouse and shoot so recklessly that it's no longer a safe place for quiet people to go to."

"Well, see here, Joe. I suppose you've heard about one of Taylor's men being shot down there last Sunday?"

"Yes, and he was a quiet, inoffensive sort of fellow, too."

"Yes, Nick told me about it this morning. He left here only an hour ago, and to-morrow Terry and I are going down there with him to see the poor fellow; if we can get hold of the name of the man who shot him, we intend to see that he is arrested by the sheriff, and taken to the jail at Marshall, so you had better wait until that is attended to before you set a day for the visit to our new neighbor."

"Look here, Fred. From all I can hear, the fellow who did the shooting belongs to a gang of desperadoes, and you'll have them all to fight if you attempt to arrest him."

"Then we'll have a battle," said Fred. "We can't afford to let those fellows run things that way down in this end of the county, and if we've got to clean them out, the sooner we do it the better. Nick says that their presence down in that section has broken up the dances they used to have there, because it is no longer safe for any ranchman to take his family there."

"Yes; none of our family have been down there during the last two months."

"What's the matter with you coming over here to-morrow morning early with your Winchester and going down with us?"

Joe was silent for a few moments, and then said:

"I'd like to go but I guess Carrie will object."

"Oh! ho!" chuckled Terry, "she's the head of the family, is she?" Wears the trousers, the boots and the spurs, eh?"

"Oh! no; but I never like to do anything contrary to her wishes."

"Yes, that's putting it another way, but it's a quiet, mild admission that she's boss. You are a frightful example, and I intend to profit by it by keeping my neck out of the noose."

"Let up on that, Terry," said Fred, "or I'll give you head away." Then turning to Joe, Fred suggested that he should not let the girls know anything about it, but take his rifle and ride over there early the next morning.

"Yes, you must start very early," remarked Terry, "for we agreed to leave here at sunrise, while Nick will leave his place at the same time and meet us at the old tavern."

"I can't get here by sunrise," returned Joe. "You'll

have to give me at least an hour or an hour and a half more time."

"All right, then: we'll wait for you. We'll give you one hour more. Just tell Carrie that you are coming over to spend the day with us, to join us in a hunt."

"All right. You'd better let her understand that before we leave here."

"Yes, of course. Let's put the horses in the barn, give them a feed and then join the girls."

They put the horses up and returned to the house.

"Fred, are you and Terry going with us up the river?" Mattie Griswold asked as soon as they joined them on the piazza.

"Yes, of course. You don't think we'd miss an opportunity to go with you two girls, do you?"

"Thank you for the compliment," she laughed. "When can you go with us? It's a new family, and we've been told they are fine people. We want to show them some attention and welcome them into our neighborhood."

"That's right. Every good family should be on neighborly terms, so as to make life pleasant for us all; but I can't say yet when we can go, as we have made an engagement with Nick Taylor for a hunt to-morrow down below here, and we want Joe to go with us."

"You don't want us girls to go, I suppose?" asked Carrie, Joe's wife.

"No; you girls stay at home for a day or two, for we may have to do some pretty hard riding, and courtship and hard riding doesn't harmonize very pleasantly."

"Oh! Joe and I have had our courtship," she laughed.

"Yes, but you must think of the other girls and us boys."

"Do you want to do your courting on horseback?" she asked.

"Well, it's very convenient to be in the saddle when you want to run away with a girl, isn't it?"

"Oh! there's no need of running away, if the girl is willing. How long will you keep Joe over here?"

"Oh; one, two or three days, maybe."

"Indeed you won't!" she said very emphatically. "If he comes over to-morrow morning, he'll come back to me in the evening, or I'll send over after him."

"How about that, Joe?" Terry asked, turning to young Griswold.

"That's all right," laughed Joe.

"Well, it may be all right for you, but it's a warning to me. If I've got to ask permission to go anywhere, and receive orders to come back at a certain time under penalty of the Lord knows what, I'll die a contented old bachelor."

"So will I," laughed Fred, "and I advise you two girls to take Carrie in hand and break up that iron rule of hers, as it will scare eligible young fellows away who don't like to give up their liberties just because they have married."

"Well, doesn't the wife have to give up some liberties, too?" Carrie asked.

"Oh! yes, they both have to; but when she ties her apron strings around her husband's neck so as to keep him from getting out of her sight, it is carrying wifely authority a little too far."

"That's so," said Terry

"Now, you hush, Mr. Olcott. You don't know anything about it," said Carrie, who was beginning to pout.

"Well, I think you are right," said Nellie Griswold. "When I marry, my husband, being the bread-winner, can come and go with perfect freedom, for I'll know all the time that he's working for me, and I'd do everything in my power to make life pleasant for him."

"Sensible!" laughed Terry, catching her around the waist, and waltzing the length of the piazza with her, and Fred, to add to the fun of the thing, seized Mattie and waltzed off with her. Joe caught Carrie and joined them. The result was that Carrie was placated, and ceased her opposition to Joe's excursion with the two boys the next day.

"Say, boys," said Joe, "what's the matter with you two riding back home with us, and all three of us starting out together to-morrow morning?"

"Oh, do come with us!" exclaimed Mattie and Nellie.

"All right," said Fred, and about an hour after dinner they all rode off together to the Griswold ranch.

Fred took charge of Mattie, whilst Terry devoted himself to her younger sister, Nellie, and they all seemed to enjoy the ride. Merry peals of laughter were heard almost continuously, for Fred and Terry were in a good humor, telling stories and cracking jokes to the very great amusement of the two girls.

When they reached the ford Terry told about Fred's meeting with Black on the river bank some couple of weeks before.

"Why, we never heard of that," said Nellie.

"No, because we started off for Texas the next day, I believe. You know Fred had trouble with Black once before down at Ranchman's Rest, and one of them rode over to Nick's place to shoot him. One of Nick's men saved Fred's life by getting in the first shot."

"Yes, I heard of that. It was before we knew you. Isn't it awful, though, for a man to have both legs and both arms broken?"

"Yes, but I'd rather do that than kill a man," remarked Terry. "You recollect once last year when we were down at Ranchman's Rest, that several of the Blacks raised a row at a dance. They are a bad lot."

"Yes, I wish that none of them lived in the county. Joe hasn't been down there for two months, and we never expect to go there again, for the men who hang around there seem to be worse than ever."

"Yes," assented Terry, "it's a good place to keep away from."

When they reached the Griswold ranch, the old folks received the boys cordially.

"How long can you stay with us, boys?" the old man asked.

"We are going to stop with you till to-morrow morning," replied Fred, "then Joe is going with us for a day or two on a hunt, and Nick Taylor will be with us, too."

"When are you going East?"

"That I don't know," said Fred: "We are going to come back over here and spend a day or two with you before we

do, and then Joe and the girls are to come over and stop a few days with us. The fact is, I'm in no hurry to go back. I'm enjoying myself better out here."

Naturally the two sisters interpreted Fred's language as having some reference to themselves, and they were highly pleased.

The rest of the afternoon and evening was spent in lively, pleasant conversation. The two girls seemed never to tire of hearing Fred and Terry talk, sing songs or tell stories.

Mr. Griswold had many questions to ask about Fred's meeting with Black at the river ford. He had not heard of it until his daughter Nellie told him about it.

"It was an unexpected meeting to me," remarked Fred. "Black wasted no words when he saw me. He dismounted and began shooting, taking refuge behind his horse. I guess the whole crowd of them have sworn to wipe me out, but I'm going to take particular pains to disappoint them."

"Of course," said the old man, "but it's a very unpleasant thing to think about."

"Yes, for I have an unconquerable desire to die of old age, and when a man tries to disappoint me in that respect, I object very strenuously to his interference."

"What are you boys going hunting for to-morrow?" the old man asked, and it was just a bit of a puzzle to Fred to know what answer to make to the question, but Terry, who was near enough to hear it, promptly replied:

"Coyotes."

"Have they been giving you any trouble?"

"Yes, a little. They are getting quite numerous down below us."

CHAPTER II.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MAN WHO BET ON HIS FIST.

Early the next morning Fred, Terry and Joe mounted their horses and rode off to the river ford, where they crossed and pushed on towards Ranchman's Rest.

When they reached there, they found that Nick Taylor was about a half hour ahead of them.

"Hello, Joe!" exclaimed Nick. "Glad to see you; didn't know you were coming."

"He came over to our place about an hour after you left us yesterday, Nick," exclaimed Fred, "and we had to return with him and spend the night at his house in order to steal him away from his wife this morning. How did you manage to get away from yours?"

"Oh! I get up early, before she does, and put on the trousers first; besides, she has the baby to look after."

"Well, how is your man here, Nick?"

"He's doing very well, but still in a pretty bad way."

"What does the doctor say about him?"

"He says he'll pull through all right, as he's a good, strong, healthy fellow."

"Well! Well! Well!" ejaculated a gruff voice, and the burly landlord of the old tavern came out to greet them. "I'm glad to see you boys back again."

"Thank you," said Fred. "I have to come down here to see you every time I visit the ranch. How's your better half and the two girls?"

"All well," was the reply of the landlord, as he shook hands with the boys. "Nick told them you were coming, and they are getting up a good dinner for you."

"Glad to hear that. Our early ride has given us a good appetite, but tell them we want to have a look at them just as soon as possible, for it's like a feast to see their faces."

Just then the landlord's wife appeared on the piazza, and Fred and Terry rushed forward to greet her.

"Where are those pretty daughters of yours?" Fred asked her.

"They are in the dining-room."

"Well, I know the way to the dining-room," said Fred starting off to join the girls, followed by Terry; and a minute later Nick and Joe out on the piazza heard the laughing voices of the two girls, who were struggling with the two boys to avoid being kissed. They were great favorites with the girls.

"You don't know how we have missed you two!" said the elder of the sisters, "and now that you have come back to us, we must have some of the old dances again."

"Yes, of course; but I hear that your dances have been turned into shooting parties."

"Yes," she replied, "it's perfectly awful the way the men behave. We haven't had a dance here in six weeks. They behave so badly that the girls from the different ranches are afraid to come here to dance any more."

"Well, if I was running this place they'd come," said Terry, "and I'm surprised the old man doesn't break up that sort of business."

"He would if he could," she replied, "but they are such a bad crowd, and shoot so recklessly, that it's dangerous to interfere with them. One of Mr. Taylor's men is up-stairs now, very badly wounded."

"Yes, we came down to meet Nick here to see him, and we wanted to see you girls, too."

"Really, now, did you come to see us?"

"Yes, of course we did. You don't think we came to see the old man, do you?"

They remained in the dining-room nearly a half hour talking with the girls, when Joe came in to say that the doctor was up-stairs with the wounded man, and that they had better go up and see him.

"All right," said Fred, "we'll see you girls later. The old man says you've got our names in the pot for a good dinner."

"Yes, we have," they laughed. "We thought you'd be hungry after your early ride."

"Well, no matter what it is you fix up for us, it will taste good just because we like the cook; and when we sit down to the table we want you two girls right alongside of us," and with that he followed Joe out of the dining-room, joined Nick, and together they went upstairs to the room to see the wounded cowboy.

The doctor was in there with him, and he recognized Fred and Terry as soon as they entered.

"Ah! glad to see you," he said, greeting Fred and extending his hand to him. "The first time we met it was to dress the wound you had given one of the Blacks."

"Yes, I remember that," laughed Fred, and then turning to the bed where the wounded cowboy lay, Fred recognized him.

"Jim, old fellow, I'm sorry to see you so badly hurt."

"I'm sorry, too," was the reply, "but I guess I'll come through all right."

"Oh! yes, you are too good a fellow to be wiped out at your age. Terry and I have come down with Nick to see what we can do for you, and if there is anything you want, let us know, and you shall have it, no matter if it costs a hundred cattle."

"Thank you, sir," replied the fellow, "I don't know that I'm in need of anything except a little pleasant company now and then."

"Well, we'll try to provide that for you. I suppose the doctor is doing his best to get you upon your feet again?"

"Yes, I'm getting on all right, but it's pretty tough to have to lie here on my back so long."

The doctor wouldn't permit them to stay in the room very long, as he wanted his patient to keep quiet and get all the sleep possible; so they all went down stairs for a consultation. The landlord knew the name of the man who had shot Jim Coulter, but remarked that he really didn't know anything about him or exactly where he lived.

"He comes here pretty often," he said. "Always with a party of friends who drink freely and seem to delight in worrying people who are strangers to them. His name is Hank Low."

"Do you know whether or not that is his real name?" Fred asked.

"No. All I know is, that the others call him by that name."

"Well, we are going to have him arrested," said Fred. "We'll have to go to Hillsdale to get a warrant and place it in the hands of the sheriff."

Hillsdale was the county seat, a small, struggling village with a court-house and jail. The sheriff lived there, and the judge resided on a ranch just a few miles east of it.

It was finally decided that Taylor and Joe Griswold should ride over to Hillsdale for the warrant, and have it delivered to the sheriff to be served.

Fred and Terry were to remain at the tavern until they returned.

They had been gone about an hour when a party of a half dozen rough-looking fellows rode up, hitched their horses to the posts in front of the tavern, and went in for drink. Fred and Terry were in the dining-room talking to the landlord's daughters when their mother came in and reported that there were several men out in the bar-room who belonged to the gang that had been making so much trouble about there of late.

"Are they sober?" Fred asked.

"Yes, they've just arrived, but I don't know how long they will be sober."

In a little while Fred and Terry went out on the piazza

and sat down on one of the benches, but had not been there ten minutes before the men in the bar-room came out and began staring at them.

Of course, the two boys took no notice of them, and one of the men went back inside to ask the landlord who they were. He told them, stating that they were quiet fellows who owned a ranch up the river some twenty miles away, and expressed a hope that they would not be interfered with.

The fellow returned, joined his companions, and told what he had learned about the two youths.

"He's a friend of Taylor's," said one of them, and then, after standing around a while longer, they went inside and took another round of drinks, after which one of them came out and asked if they wouldn't join them at the bar.

"Thank you," said Fred, "neither of us drinks any liquors at all."

"The thunder you don't! What do you drink?"

"We drink water or anything else we want when we feel like it," replied Fred.

"Then come in and drink water with us, but I never drink the stuff myself."

"Thank you again," returned Fred, "we don't wish any water just now."

"Too proud to drink with us?" the fellow asked.

"No. We simply don't wish to drink anything."

The others in the bar-room, on seeing that the two young fellows had not accepted the invitation, went out on the piazza and began firing questions.

"Don't you fellows ever drink anything?" one of them asked.

"Yes," said Terry, "we drink anything we want when we feel like it. Just now we don't feel like drinking anything at all."

"I reckon you don't want to drink with us?" said another.

"You can reckon any way you please," returned Terry. "I don't know you, you don't know me; I'm not thirsty, don't want anything to drink, and I don't see why you should bother yourself about it."

"Well, there's no use getting sassy about it," retorted the fellow.

"No, and that's what puzzled me. We told you we didn't want anything to drink, and that ought to be enough for you. It seems to me that it's you who are getting sassy."

"Look here, young fellow," said a tall, lank, long-haired man in the party, "do you see that?" and he thrust his clenched fist within a foot of Terry's face.

"Yes," replied Terry, "I've seen 'em cleaner, and a great deal dirtier."

"Well, if you don't talk low, I'll give you a taste of it."

"That's all right," said Terry, "I'm not afraid of your fist. I don't see why you should bother us at all."

"Not afraid of it, eh?"

"No. It's no more than any other man's fist. I've got a pair of them myself."

"Have you got one like that?" the fellow asked.

"Yes, got a pair of them, and they are better ones than yours, too."

"You want to bet anything on that?"

"Yes," said Terry, "I'll cover any pile you are mind to put up, that my fists are better than yours, cleaner than yours, and that I can handle them better than you can yours."

The fellow thrust his hand in his pocket and pulled out a roll of bills, amounting to about a hundred dollars, with the remark:

"Let's see the color of your money."

"Here it is," said Terry, drawing a roll of bills from his pocket.

"Come inside," said the man, "and we'll let the landlord hold the stakes."

Terry and Fred both went inside with him, and the entire party drew their money, wanting to bet that their companion could thrash the kid. Fred and Terry covered the total amount, a little over eight hundred dollars, which the landlord took charge of.

"Now, see here," said Terry, "you've got a gun, haven't you?"

"Yes, got two of them."

"Turn them over to the landlord, here."

Terry drew his revolver and passed it over to the landlord, and the other fellow did the same.

"Now, let's have another understanding," said Fred. "Whichever fellow is licked must own up like a man and let the trouble end right there."

"Oh! that's all right. That's all right," said the other fellows.

"Nobody must interfere. Come outside in front of the house."

They all went outside, where Terry drew off his coat, handed it to Fred, and the other fellow threw his coat to one of his companions. As he did so, Fred noticed a bowie knife in a case hanging to his belt.

"How about that knife there?" he asked.

"Yes," said the landlord, "give me that knife, or there'll be no fight."

The fellow took off his belt, passed it to the landlord, who carried it into the house and tossed it under the bar.

The reader can well surmise the result. The bully was a strong, tough fellow, but knew no more about the science of sparring than a mule did about a mathematical problem.

He was knocked right and left without being able to return a single blow, and Terry took special delight in giving him a full dose with each blow he landed. He was knocked down a half dozen times, but Terry always waited for him to get up on his feet again.

At last the fellow succeeded in getting his arms around Terry's waist, but at the same time Terry's left arm encircled his neck, thus getting his head in chancery, and when he got through with him he had enough. He wanted to stop, but the idea of he and his friends being cleaned out of every dollar they had with them was such a terrible alternative that he persisted a while longer, but without avail. At last he was unable to rise to his feet, so thoroughly done up was he. Still he wouldn't throw up the sponge.

"Haven't you got enough?" Terry asked him.

"No, I ain't licked."

"All right," said Terry, "I see you are game. You are trying to save your money, but you can't do it. If you don't give it up, there's another way to settle it, and that is to knock the life out of you," and with that he seized him by the collar of his shirt, pulled him to his feet, and knocked him down again.

He had to wait nearly five minutes before the fellow was able to speak, and then he said:

"I've got enough."

"All right," said Terry, turning away, taking his coat from Fred and putting it on.

The other fellows hadn't uttered a word, but they walked off a little distance, whilst the fellow whom Terry had knocked out pulled himself together, went into the bar-room and asked for his weapons.

"Wait a while," said the landlord. "Take a drink and sit down."

"I want my gun," persisted the fellow.

"Wait a while," said the landlord again.

"See here," said Terry, "just hand over that money, and then let him have his guns if he wants them."

The landlord passed the money over to Fred and Terry, who stored it away in their pockets.

"Now I've no objections to your letting him have his guns," Terry remarked.

The landlord passed the two revolvers and the bowie knife over to the bully, who took them and went outside to join his companions.

"You want to look out for that fellow and the others, too," said the landlord warningly, "for they will soon begin shooting."

"All right," said Terry, "we are pretty good at that sort of thing ourselves. Come ahead, Fred," and they went out into the open in front of the tavern about a hundred yards away, where they stopped and waited to see what the others would do.

The landlord, fearing trouble, ran to where the six men were standing.

"See here, men," said he, "don't go to shooting. That boy won your money fairly, and I want to tell you that they are both dead shots."

"Well, we are dead shots too, but we don't want to do any shooting," replied one of the men.

"Well, that's all right, then," and the landlord started back to return to his bar. One of them called to him, and he stopped.

"Say," said the fellow, "we are cleaned out entirely, and haven't any money. Will you let us have drinks?"

"Look here, boys; let me give you a little bit of advice. It's natural for you to feel sore over losing your money, and if you take just a few drinks more, you'll lose your heads and want to fight about it. My advice to you is, not to touch another drop, but go right back home, put it down to a streak of bad luck and let it go at that."

"I don't want to let it go at that. I've lost my money, and I want a chance to get it back," said one of the others.

CHAPTER III.

"THERE IS MORE IN THE MAN THAN IN THE GUN."

When the landlord heard one of the men say he wanted a chance to get his money back, he turned to him and asked:

"What sort of a chance do you want? If you are playing a game of cards, the loser has the right to demand satisfaction by trying to win it back, and a gentleman never refuses to give him a chance to do so. Now, you lost on a fist fight. Do you want to play that sort of a game? You have no right to demand any other."

"No," was the reply. "That fellow is a prize-fighter."

"No, he isn't. They own a splendid ranch about twenty miles west of here. I've known them for nearly two years, and neither one of them ever had anything to do with a prize-fight in their lives."

"Well, are we to lose our money with no chance to get it back?"

"You can get it back by continuing the game in which you lost it," returned the landlord. "What would you have done had you won? Wouldn't you have put the money in your pockets and laughed at the boys?"

That was a question that went right home, and instead of answering it, one of them suggested to the landlord that he attend to his business and leave them to look after their own.

"All right," said the tavern keeper, "I've nothing at all to do with it, but you want to look sharp, and deal square with those boys or you will get the worst of it," and with that he returned to the house, and a couple of minutes later was surprised to see Fred and Terry come in after their Winchester, which they took possession of and returned out to the piazza where they resumed their seat on the bench.

He followed them out, spoke to them in a low tone of voice, saying:

"Those fellows feel very sore, and you want to be on your guard."

"That's all right," said Terry. "If they want trouble they can get it, but we don't intend to start it. The money we won from them goes to Jim Coulter, up-stairs, to pay his doctor's bill and his board here, and we are going to turn part of it over to you and the balance to Nick Taylor to take care of for him."

"Is that so?" the landlord asked, very much surprised at their generosity.

"Yes," said Fred, "we don't need the money, and I guess Coulter does. He was shot by one of their friends, and it's nothing but right that they should pay for it. At the same time if they hadn't been so fresh, we might have returned the money to them. You've seen enough of us to know that we are neither gamblers or bums, and we make no trouble for anybody until they first start in to make it for us."

"Yes, that's just what I told them." And as there was

nobody inside, the landlord sat down on the bench alongside of them.

The other fellows finally went to their horses, unhitched them from the posts, mounted and rode away without saying a word to the landlord or anyone else.

"They are pretty badly broken up," remarked the landlord.

"Yes, I guess they are, and I wouldn't be surprised if they came back with more of their friends to clean us out."

"Neither would I," assented the tavern keeper. "They are a pretty tough crowd, and I'd like nothing better than to see them driven out of the county. I can't imagine where they get their money. They've always had their pockets full and spent it freely when they came here; but there's shooting going on every time a crowd of them get together, and if they run up against a stranger they treat him roughly. Several have been robbed of late, and two have been found killed on the other side of the river within the last month. The sheriff came down, visited the spot where they were found, but couldn't get any information upon which he could act officially."

The desperadoes had been gone a couple of hours when the landlord's wife notified them that dinner was ready, and the boys went in and enjoyed a splendid meal, for which they complimented the mother and her two daughters.

On going back into the bar-room they found four other men who had arrived, leaning against the bar, drinking and talking quietly with the landlord.

They went out on the piazza and sat down on the bench again. In a little while one of the newcomers appeared, and remarked:

"I hear you had a little scrimmage here this morning."

"Yes," said Terry, "we had a little fun, but it didn't amount to much."

"Wish I could have seen it. I know those fellows. They are all right, but apt to be a little lively when they drink too much."

"Glad to hear they are all right," returned Terry. "I wouldn't have thought so from the way they behaved. I never could understand how a man could be all right when he deliberately insults strangers without provocation."

"Maybe you are not used to our rough ways out here."

"Yes I am. I'm a ranchman myself, with thousands of cattle on it, a couple of hours' ride from here; and I know a fool when I see one, and can detect a gentleman as far as my eyesight will reach. There is a man lying up-stairs here now, in the hands of a doctor, suffering from a wound given by one of those fellows without any provocation whatever."

"Yes, I know the fellow who shot him. Hank Low is a pretty rough chap, but he was drinking rather hard that day."

"Well, what of that? Isn't a drunken man responsible for what he does?" Terry asked.

"I don't know whether he is or not. I know that when a man is blind drunk he doesn't know what he is doing."

"He's responsible for getting drunk, isn't he? Can a man throw off his responsibility by filling himself full of

whisky! The law of every state in this country says that drunkenness is no excuse."

Just then the other three came out to listen to the conversation.

"Haven't you ever been drunk?" the first speaker asked.

"No," said Terry, "I never drink anything that can make me drunk."

"Then you haven't had much fun," said the other fellow with a chuckle.

"Don't you fool yourself about that. I had a good deal more fun than that other fellow did this morning, and being sober I was able to appreciate it. I make it a rule never to get drunk, nor to let a drunken man take liberties with me."

"Don't you ever drink anything, either?" the other asked, turning to Fred.

"No, nothing that can make a man drunk. I think it a very foolish thing for a man to do."

"Well, there's lots of fools in this world I can tell you," and the four men joined in a laugh at what they thought was a funny remark.

"I agree with you there," returned Fred, "and I'll go a little farther and say that man is the only member of the animal kingdom that is a fool. Did you ever think of that?"

"No. Say that again, will you?"

"All right. I said that man was the only animal in the world that is a fool. He's the highest type of the animal kingdom, you know. He's an animal as much as a horse or cow is, but he's the highest type and is supposed to be intelligent; yet he's the only animal that produces fools."

"Say, hanged if I don't believe you are right," said one of the four.

"Well, if you think about it a little you'll soon know it instead of merely believing it. All other animals follow instinct, just the same now as they did thousands of years ago, but man follows his judgment, and is continually making blunders and doing foolish things."

The newcomers soon became deeply interested in Fred's talk, and sat down on the steps of the piazza to listen to him; and as they sat there a small bird perched on top of one of the hitching posts about fifty yards away from where they were sitting.

"What kind of a bird is that, landlord?" Terry asked.

"Don't think I ever saw one like it before."

"I don't believe I know what it is myself," said the landlord, "at least, not at this distance."

"Then I'll get him for you," and with that he drew his revolver, aimed at the bird and fired, and the little feathered victim of his marksmanship fell to the ground.

Exclamations of surprise burst from the four men, whilst the landlord went out to the hitching post, picked up the bird, and brought it back with him. Its head was gone, as though it had been chopped off by a hatchet.

"Say, is that the way you shoot?" one of the four men asked.

"Every time," said Terry. "I never throw away a bullet. Revolvers and rifles are made to send bullets just where

they are aimed. If you aim right, they'll go right to the spot ninety-nine times out of a hundred, and one over."

"Well, I've been shooting ever since I was knee high, and I can't shoot like that."

"Well, it isn't the fault of your gun," returned Terry.

"No, I reckon it ain't, but I'd like to see you do that again before I can make up my mind that it wasn't an accident."

"Why, can't you do it?" Terry asked.

"No, and I don't believe you can again."

"Well, if you've got a ten cent piece, go out there, stick it to the post, and I'll drive it in for you."

The fellow felt inside his pocket for a dime, found one, went out to the post, and by the aid of the point of his knife, managed to attach it so as to make it a pretty plain target. Then he stepped aside and waited for Terry to fire at it. Terry did so, and the dime disappeared from sight, the bullet taking it into the post a couple of inches.

The entire party examined the bullet hole, and as they were doing so, Fred made the remark:

"I'm surprised at you fellows if you look upon that as anything wonderful."

"Maybe it isn't wonderful, but we never saw anything like it out this way before. Can you shoot that way too?"

"Yes. Stick your pocket knife up there with the edge standing outward, and I'll split a bullet on it, each half entering the post on either side of it."

"Well, I want to see that done," said the fellow, fixing his knife on the post, after which they returned to the piazza to see him make the shot. After he fired they returned to the post, and found a hole on either side of the knife blade where the two halves of the bullet had entered.

"It beats any shooting I ever saw," remarked one of the men. "If I could shoot like that I wouldn't be afraid of any man in the West."

"It's a very easy thing to learn," said Fred. "There is scarcely anything impossible for a man to do if he tries hard to learn how. A bullet will go just where you send it. It's carelessness in aiming, that causes a man to miss his target, and it's one of the worst mistakes a man can make to shoot at another and miss him, for then the other fellow has a chance at him, and at the same time, if he kills him, the law justifies him, because he's been shot at first. My friend Olcott and myself were down in Cuba where people were shooting pretty wildy a year ago, and I've seen fifty Cubans or Spaniards fire at a man not more than a hundred yards away, and not one of them touched him. I can throw stones with greater accuracy than they can shoot. It's altogether in the man and not in the gun."

"Say, fellows, let's have a drink on this," suggested one of the others, and they returned to the house, where the four had drinks, Fred and Terry, of course, taking nothing; but they laughed and chatted with them, determined to make friends of them if possible.

A little later the two boys went into the sitting-room to talk with the landlord's daughters, who, of course, were very glad to have them with them. They spent an hour or so there in pleasant conversation, during which time some

four or five other men rode up and had drinks in the bar-room.

One of the girls remarked that they all belonged to the gang of men who had been making so much trouble there during the last two or three months.

"Then we won't have anything to do with them," said Fred: "at the same time we don't wish to keep you girls from helping your mother in her house work. You'll probably have to get supper for a lot of them to-night, and if you haven't any objection, we'll put on aprons, roll up our sleeves and help you."

The girls laughed heartily at the idea, and the elder one remarked that there wasn't much work to do, and that their mother was willing to let them enjoy themselves for a little while.

"Oh! look here now, girls," said Fred, "that won't do. No matter how indulgent a mother may be, her children should lighten her burden as much as possible. We have nothing to do, just waiting here for Nick and Joe to return, so we would like it a great deal better if you will let us help you with your work. Now one of you run in and tell your mother about it, and get a couple of aprons for us."

The younger sister ran out into the kitchen to see her mother. The old lady was very practical and level-headed.

"Yes," she said, "let 'em come and draw some water, and bring in more wood."

"Oh, mother! I won't tell them that."

"Well, I will," and with that she went to the sitting-room with her sleeves rolled up to her elbows, and told Fred and Terry that if they wanted to help they were welcome to do so.

"Good for you, mother!" laughed Fred. "It gives us a chance to find out whether or not these girls know how to cook. Away out here in this part of the world a fellow wants to find out about his girl before he pops a very serious question to her."

"Oh, my!" exclaimed both the girls, "we can cook just as well as mother can."

"So they can," assented the mother.

"Oh! of course you'd say that," laughed Fred. "You want to get them off of your hands. I'll bet they don't know how to fricassee a chicken."

The mother and the two daughters stared at him with wide open eyes, for it was a word they had never heard before in their lives, and didn't know the meaning of it.

"Is that a new way of cooking a chicken?" the elder daughter asked.

"Well, it's one way," answered Fred. "There are about a hundred ways, you know."

"Well, I know how to roast, boil, stew, broil or fry a chicken, but I never heard of that way before."

"Well, do you know how to make a ragout?"

"No. Never heard of that dish before. What is it?"

"Say, mother," laughed Fred, turning to the old lady, "suppose you hire Terry and I here to teach these girls how to cook?"

"All right; how much a month do you want?"

"Ten dollars a day will do."

"Yes, I've no doubt it would do for you, but it wouldn't do for us."

"Why, bless your soul! There are cooks in New York City who are paid ten thousand dollars a year."

"That may be, but there are none of them getting such wages as that out here, and, besides, the people who come here to eat are satisfied with our cooking."

"Oh! they'll just eat anything to get a look at these girls here. I think I could drink vinegar and call it honey if one of them were sitting on my knee."

"Say, mother, he's making fun of us," laughed the girls. "We'll make 'em bring in the wood and draw the water anyway," and with that the entire party left the sitting-room, made their way through the dining-room to the kitchen, and there they had a jolly time for more than an hour.

Of course the girls were delighted to have the two young men with them. Suddenly they heard a couple of pistol shots out in front of the house.

"There they go again," said the younger of the two sisters. "Just as soon as they get a few drinks they go to shooting as though they were crazy lunatics."

Several more shots were fired, accompanied by shouts and exclamations.

"Well, let 'em shoot," said Terry. "I'd rather be with these girls seven days in the week than to spend seven minutes with such fellows as those."

"So would I," put in Fred, and they went on with their work, laughing and chatting as though they didn't care two cents if every fellow out in front was killed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SHERIFF AT RANCHMAN'S REST.

Just before supper was ready the landlord's wife went into the bar-room to see her husband, and when she came back she brought the news that the man with whom Terry had fought that morning was back there again with several of his friends and inquiring for both of them.

"My husband told me to tell you to go right up to your room just as soon as you had your supper, as the men were there looking for trouble."

"How many are in there?" Fred asked.

"Oh! there are ten or a dozen of them, and nearly all of them at least half drunk. Two of them are slightly wounded from the shooting they had a little while ago, but they keep on asking for you two, and my husband told them you had gone out somewhere."

"All right," said Fred, "we don't want to have any trouble with them, so we'll keep out of their way; but instead of going up to our room, we'll stay here in the kitchen and help you and the girls with your work. If any of them come in here, we'll soon get 'em in the pot."

For fear that they might be seen by the others Fred and Terry ate their supper in the kitchen, and they had scarcely

finished the meal when they were told that Nick and Joe had returned, accompanied by the sheriff of the county.

"By George! that's good news!" said Fred. "Tell them to come back in here, please."

The landlord's wife went after them, and a few minutes later Nick and Joe, accompanied by the sheriff, came into the kitchen.

Nick introduced the boys to the sheriff.

"Glad to see you two," said the sheriff, as they shook hands with him. "I've heard of both of you several times. I haven't forgotten that splendid fight that Taylor and Fearnot made with the Apache Indians two years ago."

"Thank you," said Fred. "It looks as though there is something worse than Apaches on hand just now."

"Yes, they are a pretty hard lot out there, and they are filling up fast with whisky, which will make them a great deal worse. I have a warrant in my pocket for that fellow Low."

"Good! Good!" said Fred. "I don't know whether he's out there with those fellows or not, but if he is, we'll have him; and let me say to you, Mr. Sheriff, that we four boys stand ready to render any assistance you may need."

"Thank you," said the sheriff. "I don't know that we'll need any assistance to-night, because Low isn't here, and no charges have been made against those out there, except in a vague sort of way."

"Well, if either Terry or I should go out there they'd attack us at once. That's why we've stayed back here in the kitchen waiting for the return of Nick and Joe."

"Oh! I don't think they would make any trouble while I am here," said the sheriff.

"All right, then," said Fred, "when you three have had your supper, we'll go out there."

"Now, what's the use of that?" said the landlord's wife. "Why can't you be satisfied with going in the sitting-room and staying there?"

"Madam," said the sheriff, "that sort of thing wouldn't do. These four young men have as much right to come and go as those fellows have, and I am here to see that they are not interfered with."

"Why, bless your life, Mr. Sheriff," she replied, "if they were interfered with they'd kill half those fellows before you could count ten, and I don't want to have any such thing happen here."

"I don't think anything of the kind will happen, madam, so if you will give us our supper in the dining-room, we'll sit down to it, for I'm pretty hungry myself."

"So am I," said Joe and Nick.

The supper was taken into the dining-room and Fred and Terry sat down with the others to talk with them while they were eating. They had been there but a few minutes when the landlord came in and said the men out in the bar-room wanted supper, about ten of them.

"Tell them to wait, then," said his wife, who at once proceeded to arrange the supper for them. She had not half finished the task when four or five of the men came in and sat down at the table, glaring at the sheriff and his four friends.

"Say," sang out one of them to the girls, "what are you keeping us waiting for while others are eating?"

"We didn't know that anybody else wanted any supper," replied the elder of the two sisters, "until just a few minutes ago when father came in and told us to fix places for several more."

"Say, that don't go!" blurted out the fellow. "You think we ain't good enough to eat with the sheriff and those boys."

She made no reply to him, but hurried with her work whilst he continued making some very insulting comments.

Suddenly her mother went up to him and said very firmly:

"Keep your mouth shut now, or you won't get any supper. You can behave like a brute out in the bar-room, but you can't in here."

Instead of obeying her the fellow made the air sulphurous with his profanity, and the two girls fled from the dining-room.

It was more than Fred could stand. He whipped out his revolver and aiming at the fellow called out to him:

"Stop right there, you brute, or you'll hand in your chips where you sit."

The fellow saw the muzzle of the revolver staring him in the face from across the table, and knew what he was up against. He straightened up and said:

"All right, pard."

"Well, let it be all right," returned Fred. "I don't mind your talk myself, but you've got to behave in the presence of the ladies or get off the earth."

The fellow proceeded to eat his supper, whilst Fred held his revolver ready for instant use, for he suspected that if he returned it to its place, either he or some of his friends would get the drop on him.

The landlord's wife seeing the situation, became somewhat demoralized. She put down some of the dishes she held in her hand, and called out:

"Please don't do any shooting in here!"

"No danger whatever," said Fred. "That fellow has got sense enough to eat his supper quietly."

And he was right.

The sheriff remained at the table until the others had finished and left the room.

"Young man," said he, turning to Fred, "you managed him well."

"Yes," was the reply, "the harmonizing influence of a revolver is sometimes wonderful."

"Yes, but I fear if you go outside there, you may have to face some revolvers yourself."

"I wouldn't be surprised, but if you are through with your supper we'll go out there and see about it."

"Well, come ahead," said the sheriff, "we can't afford to let those fellows run the whole ranch."

With that the five arose and left the dining-room. On entering the bar-room the dozen men in there turned and stared at them.

"Got any good cigars, landlord?" the sheriff asked.

"Yes," was the reply, setting a box out on the counter.

The sheriff took one, so did Joe and Nick.

"Gentlemen," called out the sheriff, "will you have a smoke?"

"Yes, believe I will," said one of them, stepping forward and taking a cigar from the box, and the next moment the entire crowd followed his example.

Neither Fred nor Terry smoked, but they remained close to the sheriff, each with his hand on his revolver in his pocket, and at the same time kept their eyes on the other fellows.

Finally the sheriff began mingling with the crowd, but the four boys kept together in a bunch at the lower end of the bar.

By and by two more men arrived, and as they entered the room several of the men called out:

"Hello, Hank!"

"Hello, boys," one of the newcomers responded.

On hearing the name the sheriff turned quickly and eyed the man from head to feet.

"Who is he?" he asked of one standing at his elbow.

"That's Hank Low," and the next moment Low came up to make his way to the bar for a drink, and the man who had given his name to the sheriff caught him by the arm and introduced him, saying:

"This is the sheriff, Hank. You want to keep on the good side of him."

"Sheriff, eh? Glad to meet you, Mr. Sheriff," and Low shook hands with him.

"Glad to meet you," returned the officer. "I came down here from Hillsdale to-night looking for you. The judge up there wants to see you."

"He does, eh? Why didn't he come down with you to see me?"

"He doesn't travel about much. He gave me a warrant for you, and requested me to fetch you up there to him," and with that he produced the warrant and told Low that he was his prisoner, charged with shooting James Coulter.

"I reckon you will have to take me up there dead, sheriff."

"Well, I wouldn't like to do that," returned the officer, very coolly. "I'd rather have you go along with me alive and in a quiet, decent sort of way."

"I'm a decent sort of a man," said Low, "but I don't go with no sheriff as a prisoner. Not while I'm alive," and with that he reached for his revolver.

The sheriff was expecting it and was too quick for him. He drew his revolver, pressed the muzzle of it against his breast, and remarked:

"I leave it with you whether you go dead or alive."

The next moment the sheriff's feet were swept from under him and he fell heavily to the floor. His revolver went off, and wounded one of Low's friends, who had crowded around him. The others scattered about the room, each man with his gun in his hand, whilst Low made a break for the door and passed out of sight.

The sheriff sprang to his feet and dashed after him, but before he reached the door another fired at him, and he fell out on the piazza.

Quick as a flash Fred fired at his assailant, breaking his right arm, and his revolver fell to the floor. Then a general fusillade followed. Nick, Terry and Joe joined in, but in less than thirty seconds the other fellows were all out of doors except two, who had fallen.

"Come outside, boys!" called Fred. "They began it, now we'll have it out to a finish!"

He dashed out on the piazza, followed by the other three, and the bullets flew for a few seconds as thick as hail. Then the other fellows retreated out of range.

"Any of you hurt, boys?" Fred asked, turning to Nick, Terry and Joe.

"No," came from each one of them.

"Landlord, look after the sheriff here, please," said Fred, "while we take care of the other fellows."

There were two wounded men inside the house, whilst three others were down on the ground just beyond the steps of the piazza. The landlord went to the sheriff and asked:

"Where are you hit, sheriff?"

"I'm hit pretty hard," was the reply. "Got it in my right breast. You'd better send for the doctor."

"Well, I'll take you up-stairs to a room," and the landlord being a strong, burly fellow, took him up in his arms and bore him up-stairs to a room where he laid him on the bed, and called his wife to look after him.

Then he came down again and sent a man after the doctor.

Just then one of the wounded men in the bar-room attempted to leave.

"Stay where you are," said Terry.

It was the man who had shot the sheriff, and whose right arm was broken. The man attempted to push his way out when Terry gave him a whack over the head with his revolver that stretched him on the floor. Then he took possession of the weapon and thrust it into his own pocket.

"Joe," said he, "get that other fellow's gun over there."

Joe went over to where the other man was lying on the floor groaning and took possession of his revolver.

In the meantime one of the men sitting on the ground outside fired at Fred, who was on the piazza, and the bullet whistled within an inch of his head. Before Fred could return the shot, Nick Taylor had bowled the fellow over by a well-directed shot from his revolver. Then he stepped out and secured the weapons of all three.

"Well, we've got five of them, Fred," said Terry, coming out and joining him and Nick on the piazza.

"Yes, but there's some eight or ten more of them left. Step back inside and get the Winchesters. If any of them come back to get their horses from the hitching post, shoot them down if they don't surrender."

Terry brought out the Winchesters and the four boys stood guard out on the piazza, where the shadow of the house protected them from observation, whilst the clear starlight enabled them to see quite a distance over the open space in front of the tavern.

"Keep back in the shadow of the house," warned Fred, "or you might catch a bullet."

Such was the situation when the doctor arrived, accompanied by the hired man.

"Doctor," said Fred, "here's a little work for you to-night."

"How many?" the doctor asked.

"Well, there's two inside, three out there on the ground, whilst the sheriff is up-stairs pretty badly wounded. Please attend to him first."

"Why, you've been doing some pretty lively work," remarked the doctor as he followed the landlord up to the sheriff's room.

Fred made no reply, but was content to remain on guard to catch any of the other fellows should they attempt to get possession of their horses.

"Say," called out one of the men nearly a hundred yards away, "haven't you fellows got enough of this?"

"No," returned Fred, "come back and let's have it out."

"You come out here," returned the voice.

"Thank you, I prefer to stay where I am. We've got the advantage of you and intend to keep it. You've shot the sheriff, and we are going to hold on to your horses to find out who you fellows are."

"Going to keep our horses, are you?"

"Yes, but you can have them if you can get them."

A few minutes later the men made a rush for their horses, and the four boys opened fire on them, under the protecting shadow of the house, and for about thirty seconds the revolvers popped at a lively rate.

The men retreated, several of them being hit, and that was the last that was seen of them that night; but still neither Fred nor the boys relaxed their vigilance in the least.

A little later the landlord came down and said that the sheriff wanted to see Fearnot, and Fred went up-stairs with him, where he found that the doctor had dressed his wound without having been able to find the bullet.

"Fearnot, the doctor says I am pretty hard hit, and if I pull through at all it will be many weeks before I can get out."

"Sorry to hear that, sheriff," said Fred. "We've got five of those fellows down stairs, though, but I think two of them are finished."

"That's good work," said the sheriff, "I'm sorry my deputies are not here. I have two, and they are pretty good fellows, but I don't think they are the men to tackle that gang. They are a crowd of desperadoes, and should either be captured or driven out of the county. If you will agree to act for me, I'll appoint you my head deputy to act as sheriff until I'm able to resume my duties myself, and will give you authority to call upon all law-abiding citizens to assist you in the work."

"I'll do it, Mr. Sheriff," said Fred very promptly.

"All right, then," and the sheriff requested the doctor to get pen, ink and paper to write out the appointment for Fred as sheriff, at his dictation.

The landlord procured writing material and the doctor wrote it out as dictated and the sheriff signed it, whilst the landlord and physician signed their names to it as witnesses.

CHAPTER V.

FRED FEARNOT BECOMES A SHERIFF.

When Fred returned down stairs he found Terry, Nick and Joe still on the piazza, watchful and ready for any emergency.

"Boys," said he, "the sheriff is pretty badly hurt, and he has appointed me his deputy to act as sheriff until he can get out again, with authority to appoint as many deputies as I may need."

"Good! Good!" said Terry, "we are all deputies then, eh?"

"Yes, all four of you."

"Well, look here," said Joe, "I don't know whether I can act as a deputy or not."

"That's all right, old man," said Fred, "you can't help yourself. When a sheriff calls on a citizen for assistance, he's got to serve whether he wants to or not. That's the law, you know, and you can lay all the blame on me if you like."

"All right," said Joe, "it's every man's duty to help enforce the law."

"You've got it right, old fellow," said Fred, "I want about a dozen more men, and if we don't clean out that gang inside of a fortnight, I'm a pretty bad hand at calculating."

Just then the doctor came down and proceeded to look after the wounds of the others. Two of those out on the ground didn't need any help from him. They only needed an undertaker.

"Sorry you lost a job, there, doctor," remarked Nick Taylor. "I knocked that fellow over myself."

"Well, you made a neat job of it," returned the physician. "We'd better lay him out on the piazza there in proper shape, for he will be cold by morning."

They laid out the two dead men and then turned to the wounded ones.

The man with the broken arm was the first one looked after.

"You'll lose that arm," said the doctor, after he had examined it.

"Why can't you mend it up?" the fellow asked.

"Because it is cut in two above the elbow by a bullet. Had it been broken any other way, it would be an easy matter for you to keep it."

The man protested against an amputation.

"What difference does it make to you?" Terry asked. "You are the chap who shot the sheriff, and I think you'll be hanged before your arm could get well, whether it's amputated or not."

"You are mistaken," said the man. "I didn't shoot the sheriff."

"Why, four of us saw you when you fired at him," put in Joe Griswold.

The other two men were pretty badly hurt, now danger-

ously so, and the doctor at once proceeded to attend to them with the assistance of the landlord and his hired man.

In the meantime the four boys took charge of the horses belonging to the desperadoes, leading them around to the stable lot in the rear of the old tavern. There they removed the saddles and bridles, and turned the horses loose in the lot, leaving one of their number to stand guard over them, whilst the others returned to the house, promising to relieve the guard every two hours.

The next morning the landlord's wife and her two daughters congratulated the boys on having escaped unhurt.

"So you are sheriff, now," said the mother to Fred.

"Yes, so I am, and these others are my deputies, so you want to be very careful how you behave."

"Oh! I am so afraid we are going to have an awful lot of trouble," she remarked.

"I don't think so," said Fred. "We are going to break up that gang and lose very little time at it."

"Well, I do hope that none of you will be hurt. There is quite a crowd of them, and you will need more men than you've got."

"Yes, and we'll soon have them here, too."

The two dead men were buried about a quarter of a mile away from the tavern, after which the boys held a consultation as to what was best to be done.

Fred made the suggestion to Taylor that they send a note back to their two ranches, and have a half dozen men come from each place with their Winchesters.

"I guess that's the best thing we can do, Fred," said Nick. "I can spare five men."

"All right, then; I'll have Wicklow send six of ours; that will be eleven, and we four will make it fifteen. We ought to have about ten more in all, well armed and mounted, and then sweep down the river after those fellows who got away from us last night. We must catch that Hank Low if we have to chase him beyond the borders of the state."

"Fred," suggested Terry, "you'd better have your appointment sent up to Hillsdale for the judge to confirm it, and have him send down eight or ten more men to join us."

"That's a good idea," said Fred. "I'll go up and see the sheriff, and find out what he thinks about it."

When he saw the wounded officer, the latter said it was not at all necessary, but at the same time it might have greater effect on those who didn't understand the law in such matters.

"But," added the sheriff, "see if you can get hold of the names of those fellows who were here last night, and have the judge issue warrants for their arrest."

Fred saw the point, and through the landlord, his hired man, and one of the wounded prisoners, managed to get hold of the name of every man who was at the tavern the night before.

Fred wrote them down and sent them to Hillsdale by the hired man, who carried with him the written appointment signed by the sheriff.

In the meantime Nick Taylor mounted his horse to re-

turn to his own ranch and Fred and Terry's, after the cowboys.

"Now, boys," said Fred to Terry and Joe, "there are only three of us here, and we've got to hold our own against all comers until Nick returns. We must keep our Winchesters handy all the time."

"All right," said Terry, "if they show up we'll have some hot work."

The landlord gave it as his opinion that the desperadoes would not show up that day, but would probably consume the time in getting together all their gang, and come back in the evening after their horses.

"I hope you are right," said Fred. But during the day several ranchmen having heard of the trouble rode over to the tavern to get the news. They were astonished at what they heard, and four or five volunteered their services to help the newly-appointed sheriff break up the band of desperadoes.

"That's right, gentlemen," said Fred, "I'd be glad to have you send out to some of your neighbors and ask them to come in and help us. If we can get together men enough we can catch every one of those fellows or else run them out of the state. A short, sharp campaign against them is the best way to get rid of them."

By night they had five more accessions, all of them ranch owners. That made an even dozen, every man of them armed with a Winchester.

Quite late in the afternoon two men rode up in front of the tavern and one of them called the landlord out and handed him a note. There were no names signed to it. It was merely a notice that if their horses left there the night before were not turned over to the bearer of the note, he would be held responsible for retaining them.

"Oh! this won't do," said the landlord. "There are no names signed to this, and I can't turn another man's property over without an order from him."

Fred came up and the landlord showed him the note.

"Why, see here," said he, "those horses are not in your possession. They are in charge of the sheriff of the county."

"That's so," said the other, very much relieved, "I didn't think of that."

"Well, that's just how the matter stands," remarked Fred, and then turning to the two men who had brought the note, he asked:

"Do you belong to that gang?"

"No, we don't belong to any gang. We are hired men on McConnel's ranch."

"I know McConnel," said the landlord. "He's all right."

"Well, do you know whether these two men belong on his ranch or not?"

The landlord shook his head and replied that he did not know where they belonged.

"Well, see here," said Fred, turning again to the two men, "I am acting as sheriff, under appointment of the sheriff himself, who is wounded. You go back to the men who gave you this note, and tell them that they must apply for the horses in person."

"Oh! you've been made sheriff, eh?" said one of the men, who seemed to be a pretty glib talker.

"Yes," said Fred, "I'm a ranch owner in this county and a taxpayer."

"What's your name?" the fellow asked.

"Fred Fearnot. Perhaps you've heard it before?"

"Yes, I believe I have."

"Well, you are going to hear of it again, and that pretty soon. If you belong on the McConnel ranch, I would advise you when you go back to stay there until this trouble is over, for if you get mixed up in it, you will be very sorry for it."

"All right," said the fellow. "I haven't got anything to do with them at all. They asked Mr. McConnel to let us bring the note up here for them."

The men rode away and an hour or so later six men rode up from Fred and Terry's ranch, each with his Winchester.

"By George! boys," exclaimed Fred, "I'm glad to see you! We had a circus here last night without any clown in it, and the probabilities are we'll have another."

"All right, boss," laughed one of the men, "Mr. Taylor told us that you wanted us, and you know that we always obey orders."

"Where are Taylor's boys?" Fred asked.

"I haven't seen them, but he said they would be here."

While they were talking, Nick rode up with five of his men, and the others gave them a cheer as they dismounted in front of the old tavern.

"Now, landlord," said Fred, "I'll appoint you commissary for this crowd, and you must feed them right up to the limit."

"All right," was the reply, "but who is the paymaster?"

"One hasn't been appointed yet, but you can look to me for your pay."

"Good enough!" said the landlord.

His wife and daughters prepared a substantial supper for them, and after they had partaken of it, Fred sent out scouts from among his and Taylor's cowboys, in different directions from the tavern, about a half mile away, instructing them to keep a sharp lookout.

A little later the hired man returned from Hillsdale with Fred's credentials endorsed by the judge, and accompanied by nine men who had been sworn in by the judge himself as deputies.

"By George! we'll have a regiment pretty soon," remarked Fred, as he told the men to go in and get their supper.

While the newcomers were in the dining-room, two men rode up, dismounted, went in and had drinks at the bar. Nobody knew who they were. They claimed that they were riding through, going to the next county, and had not seen or heard anything of the men they were questioned about, and after staying there about an hour and taking several drinks, they rode away.

"Terry," said Fred, "those two fellows are spies for those desperadoes."

"I don't doubt it in the least," said Terry, "but why did you let them go?"

"Simply because I had no right to interfere with them. Martial law doesn't exist here, and there is no war on."

"The dance there isn't," laughed Terry. "I thought we had a battle here last night."

"Yes, but it was not a military fight. If none of them show up to-night, we'll go out after them to-morrow. If we had about a dozen girls here now we could have a dance."

"So we could, but we can't get any girls out until this little trouble is over with."

Somewhat to the surprise of Fred and the others, no new arrivals occurred during the evening, and the ranchmen, together with those who had come down from Hillsdale, spent the time drinking moderately, smoking, and trying to have fun with Fred, each one calling him sheriff. It seemed strange to them that such a youth should have been appointed by the old sheriff, who had held the office for several years.

"That's all right," said Nick Taylor, who knew pretty much all of them. "He couldn't have found a better man in the state for the work in hand."

"What's he going to do?" someone asked. "Is he going to wait here for those fellows to come in and give themselves up?"

"You can wager your ranch that he won't. When he wants a fellow, he goes after him."

A little later Fred notified them to be ready for an early start the next morning, so they prepared to pass the night as comfortably as they could. The old tavern was not able to lodge so many at once, so the majority of them, particularly the cowboys, slept on the floor.

Early the next morning Fred divided his force into three parties of twelve each. He was to command one himself, another was placed in Terry's charge, whilst Nick and Joe were to hold the third in hand and remain at the tavern to respond to any call that might be made for them. He sent Terry across the river to go down on the right bank, whilst he followed the road down the left. There were men in each command who were to act as guides, and who knew by sight pretty much all the fellows in the gang of desperadoes.

Then they started out; Fred rode nearly ten miles without a stop. Then he met a man who told them that there was a party of fifteen or more men farther down the river at a small ranch where there were no cattle.

"Do you know anything about them?" Fred asked him.

"No, not much. They've never bothered me any, but they are coming and going all the time."

"Well, do you know a man named Hank Low?"

"Yes, he's with that crowd down there now."

"How far from here is that place?"

"I know the place," said one of his men. "There are two houses on it right in the edge of the timber."

"Yes," said the other fellow, "that's the place."

"Then come ahead," ordered Fred, leading off at a winging gait, and in a little while came in sight of the two houses in the edge of the timber.

"Quick, men!" he called out to them. "We must surround the place before they can get away, but leave the

open side clear for them," and with that he dashed into the timber, and in a few minutes they were in the rear of the house, where every man dismounted and tied his horse to the bushes.

They were seen by somebody on the place and the alarm was given. A man appeared in the yard at the rear of the house with a rifle in his hand, who proceeded to investigate. As he advanced towards the bushes, he was suddenly held up by two men who covered him with their rifles.

"Hello!" said he, "what does this mean?"

"It's a sheriff's party who has come after Hank Low," called out Fred.

"That's a lie," was the reply. "The sheriff is hurt, and is at Ranchman's Rest and I know it."

"Yes, but another sheriff has been appointed, and he is here with a warrant for Low's arrest."

"Well, Hank is in the house, and if you want him you'd better go in and get him."

"Come into the bushes here," ordered Fred, "and give up your gun."

There was nothing else for the fellow to do but to obey, so he went into the bushes and was quickly seized and disarmed. Fred recognized him as one of the men who was at Ranchman's Rest the night the sheriff was shot. He asked him what his name was, and he said it was Smith.

"What other name have you got?" Fred asked him.

"Bill Smith," was the reply.

"Say, how long have you been going under the name of Bill Smith?" one of Fred's men asked him. "I've known you as Jim McLain for a year past."

The fellow made no reply and Fred remarked:

"I have a warrant for the arrest of Jim McLain. Take that man and tie him up."

Two of the men seized him and in a few minutes he was tied hard and fast.

"Now, how many men are in that house there?" Fred asked of the prisoner.

"Go in and find out," was the reply.

"Oh! we'll find out. Don't worry about that. Do you belong here?"

"Yes, I live here."

"What are you doing for a living?"

"Ranching, of course."

"Where are your cattle? I don't see any on the place."

"They are farther down below here where the grass is better."

"Well, we'll see about that," and then raising his voice, Fred called out:

"Hank Low! Come out of there. The sheriff is here after you."

The next moment a man appeared at the back door of the house, and sang out:

"Where is the sheriff? Let him come in and get Hank."

"What's the matter with Hank coming out himself?"

"Well, he says if the sheriff wants him let him come and get him."

"All right," returned Fred, "we'll take our time about that," and the fellow went back into the house.

"Now, men, keep quiet," said Fred. "Just lie low, and obey orders."

They kept quiet for nearly an hour, very much to the surprise of the men in the house, who could neither see nor hear anything of them. By and by two of them came out to investigate, and before they were aware of it, they walked right into a trap where they found themselves facing a half dozen Winchesters.

CHAPTER VI.

HOT WORK FOR THE NEW SHERIFF.

It would have been difficult to find two more surprised men in the whole state than were the two desperadoes when they found themselves held up out there in the bushes. They were promptly disarmed and bound. Fred recognized one of them as having been in the party at Ranchman's Rest on the night the sheriff was shot.

One of them started to give warning to the men in the house, and was knocked down by a rifle barrel in the hands of one of Fred's men.

"If he tries to give warning again," said Fred, "send a bullet through his head. Now all of you keep quiet."

Another hour passed, and it was very evident that those in the house were uneasy about the failure of the other two to return. A little later a man appeared at the door and called out to them several times, but, of course, received no answer, and he returned inside to consult with the others.

Their horses were in a lot about fifty yards from the house, where there was a barn or stable built of logs. They evidently made up their minds to go out, mount and try to get away; one of them started out evidently to see if he would be permitted to get to the barn. He had no rifle, but there was a brace of revolvers in his belt. Just as he was about to enter the horse lot, Fred called out to him:

"Come into the bushes here, or you'll lie down right there by the gate. He stopped and hesitated.

"I won't do nothing of the sort," growled the fellow as he started to return to the house.

"Say, Tom," said Fred, "take care of that fellow," and the man addressed raised his rifle and fired.

The desperado threw up his hands, staggered a few paces and fell.

The next moment a half dozen rifle shots came from the house, from a couple of windows, and the bullets whistled all around where Fred and three or four of his men were protected by the trees and undergrowth.

"Don't fire a shot unless you can see your man," said Fred, and then he called out in a loud voice:

"You fellows in there may just as well come out and give yourselves up, for we are going to have you dead or alive."

"Who are you?" came back from the house.

"I am the sheriff of this county," was the reply.

"How can that be when the sheriff is at Ranchman's Rest badly hurt?"

"He appointed me sheriff in his place, and the judge at Hillsdale has endorsed the appointment, and every man of us here is a deputy."

"Well, who are you?"

"My name is Fearnot. Perhaps some of you fellows know me, and if you don't believe that I have been appointed sheriff send a man out here to see the credentials. I promise that he shall not be hurt, and if he wishes to return to the house he can do so unharmed."

A few minutes later the door opened, and a man came out and started boldly towards the bushes. Fred saw him and called in a low tone to his men to keep out of sight—all but two of them.

The man came up and Fred stepped out from behind the tree and confronted him with two of his men.

"Let me see your appointment as sheriff," the fellow asked, and Fred showed it to him with the endorsement of the judge at Hillsdale, as well as the seal of the county, which had been stamped on it.

"Yes, this seems to be all right," said the fellow. "What do you want with us?"

"We want every man for whom we have a warrant."

"How many warrants have you got?"

"Well, we've got about fifteen here, and there are others out for about as many more. If you want to hear the names of the men whom we want, I'll give them to you," and he read them out.

"What are we to be arrested for?" the man asked.

"For that little racket at Ranchman's Rest the other night, and we want Hank Low for shooting Coulter."

"Well, Hank is in the house, and he says he won't be taken."

"Well, is your name on this list?"

"Yes," said the fellow, "but I've got your promise that I can go back into the house."

"Yes, but tell those with you that if they don't come out inside of ten minutes and surrender, we'll shoot the house to pieces."

The man returned and Fred waited about fifteen minutes. Then getting no response from those inside, he sang out:

"Say, you fellows in there! Time's up! What are you going to do?"

"That depends upon what you do!" came back from the house.

"Well, we are going to open fire on you if you don't come out of there within five minutes."

"Fire and be hanged to you!" came back in a fierce growling voice.

"Now, men," said Fred, "this is pretty close range. Only about a hundred yards to the house, and we've all got Winchesters, which can send a bullet clear through both sides of the house. Aim about two feet above the floor and keep blazing away until they surrender."

There were twelve in all and about a half a minute later as many Winchesters began popping. A good many shots came back from the house, but the besiegers kept up their fire without intermission for about ten minutes. Then the door was thrown open and a rifle barrel was thrust out

with about half of a dirty white handkerchief in the muzzle of it.

"Let up, boys," said Fred, and the firing ceased.

"Now, come out of there," Fred called out, "and lay your guns down on the ground."

Only four men came out.

"Where are the others?" Fred asked.

"They are in the house. They can't get out. They've been shot."

"Well, who's to blame for that? You had fair warning. Lay down your guns, and come out here."

The men laid their guns down on the ground and marched into the timber, where they were seized and bound.

"Now, see here," said Fred, turning to the prisoners. "I'm going to take a half dozen men into the house there, and if we are fired on you will be shot right where you lie. You'd better be careful now and tell the truth."

"Every man now in the house is down on the floor wounded," said one of the prisoners. "Maybe some of them are dead."

"All right, I'll take your word for it," and calling six of his men to follow him, Fred led the way, and entered the house, where he found five men on the floor in one room and two in another, everyone shot in the legs, whilst two were dead from bullets that struck them after they were down.

"This is pretty bad business, men," he called to them. "I'm sorry it happened, but you made the mistake of resisting the law."

"We didn't know you was a sheriff," said one of the wounded men.

"Yes, you did. The man you sent out told you that he had read the credentials. Gather up those arms there, men."

The arms were gathered up, whilst Fred made inquiries for Hank Low.

He was pointed out, and it was found that his right leg was broken by a bullet.

"You are the fellow I'm after," said Fred.

"Well, you've got me," was the reply. "What are you going to do with me?"

"That's for the judge to say," returned Fred. "I'm going to take you to Hillsdale and land you in the county jail."

"My leg's broken," he replied.

"That's all right. It doesn't let you out. You can be taken care of very easily. We are going to break up your gang if we have to kill every member of it."

Fred then called in the others, who came with their prisoners. The latter were made to sit down on the floor in a corner of the room, where they were tied together so it was impossible for them to get away. Then he sent one of his own men to another ranch three miles away for a couple of wagons in which to move the prisoners. Then he ordered two of the prisoners to be unbound that they might look after their wounded companions, as well as to bury the two who had been killed.

They were the worst whipped lot of men that Fred had ever seen, and, like men of such character, several of them

offered to turn state's evidence and betray their comrades.

"We don't want any evidence," said Fred. "Everyone of you has got to take his punishment. You can't save yourselves that way; yet I don't know what the judge will do when we get to Hillsdale. It's my business to land you all there, and I'm going to do it, unless I get wiped out."

There were seventeen of them in all, and when they found out that they had been defeated and captured by a dozen, some of them swore roundly.

"Yes, and if it's any satisfaction to you, I'll tell you that not one of my men has been hurt. There's lots of ways of catching birds like you. I knew that I could get away with you, and I waited on you several hours to give you a chance; but you insisted on having a fight. You seem to forget that Winchesters at short range can send bullets through both sides of a log house, unless the logs are very large. Down in Cuba once, Olcott and I were attacked by nearly two score of Spaniards, who took refuge behind trees. We had Mauser rifles ourselves, and we aimed at the center of each tree, and knocked them over like turtles falling off of a log, while the fools kept waiting to get a chance at us, without thinking to fire at the tree that protected us. Some of you fellows have been holding up the stage coach, and if we can get the proof of it, you'll swing just as sure as we can get a rope that will hold you up. Honest men can make a living if they are willing to work, but when they begin plundering, it's only a question of time when they will be rounded up. There are some thirty or forty of you fellows in this gang, and I'm going to get them dead or alive."

The fellows had nothing to say for a little while. The wounded were made as comfortable as possible under the circumstances, and then two of the men under Fred's orders proceeded to search the premises, as well as the prisoners. He was astonished at the amount of money found on the men.

"You fellows have been doing a pretty good business," he remarked.

"Are you going to take our money away from us?" one of them asked.

"Yes, for the present; but I'll count every man's pile, write it down on a list and turn it over to the court. You may flatter yourselves that some of you will be acquitted for lack of proof, but don't forget that you are going to be punished for resisting the officers of the law."

A couple of hours later the men who had been sent to the other ranch for wagons, returned with two, accompanied by their owners. Fred showed them his credentials as a sheriff, and promised to see that their teams would be paid for and returned to them.

The wounded men and the prisoners were then placed in them, with a guard of two men to each wagon, and sent off to Ranchman's Rest with instructions to deliver the prisoners at the jail at Hillsdale, unless the physician at Ranchman's Rest should forbid some of the wounded men from going.

That left Fred with but eight men, and turning to the ranchmen who owned the wagons he made inquiry as to

where he could cross the river to meet Olcott's command on the other side.

One of the ranchmen told him that the river could be forded about a mile below there, and that he would probably find quite a crowd of the gang on a ranch about a half a mile from the river, where they had been making their headquarters for several months past.

"I'm glad you've cleaned out this place here," said the ranchman, "for they've given us a great deal of trouble."

"Yes, so I've heard; but I don't think you'll be troubled by them any more. I own a ranch myself west of Ranchman's Rest, and they have not extended their operations up that far; but they have broken up the family gatherings at the old tavern."

"Yes, so I heard. I'm sorry the sheriff is hurt, because he's a friend of mine, and I've known him for years."

"Yes, he's a good officer," returned Fred. "I'm sorry he is hurt," and with that Fred took leave of them and rode on down the left bank of the river till he reached the ford. There he crossed over and pushed on up the trail till they came in sight of the place mentioned by the ranch owner. To his surprise he found the place deserted, and wondered which way they had gone, or what had become of Terry and his crowd.

"They haven't been gone from here very long," said his guide, "and it's easy to follow their trail. There must be at least a score of horses in the party."

"Well, that means a horse to every man," returned Fred. "Just follow the trail and we'll keep up with you."

The guide led off, and Fred and the others followed. It seemed pretty evident that the desperadoes were making for the main road which crossed the river just below Ranchman's Rest.

"What the deuce has become of Terry?" Fred kept asking himself as he rode along. "He came down on this side of the river, but must have turned off in another direction."

Suddenly the trail turned off from the border of the timber and seemed to be going in the direction of the road several miles away from the stream.

"They are keeping well together," said he to one of his men. "It must be that they are trying to get away."

Suddenly they heard rifle shots some distance ahead of them, and they urged their horses forward to reach the crest of the hill. When they got there they saw about a half mile away two bodies of horsemen exchanging shots. One seemed to be about double the number of the other.

"There they are, boys!" said Fred. "That smaller crowd out there is Terry's, and he's putting up a brave fight. Come ahead now, and we'll make the numbers about even," and with that he put spurs to his horse and dashed away at full speed, followed by the others.

In a very few minutes they were within rifle shot of the gang whose trail they had been following, and at once opened fire on them. It was more than the desperadoes could stand, and they made a break to the left to reach a piece of timber some three or four miles away. Then ensued a running fight, the Winchesters popping continuously and a man dropping out of his saddle here and there. Both

Terry and Fred called encouragingly to each other, and in a few minutes they were riding side by side.

"Don't let one of them get away, Fred," yelled Terry, whose eyes were blazing with the light of battle.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BATTLE WITH THE DESPERADOES.

The piece of timber to which the desperadoes were retreating was some ten or fifteen acres in extent, with an open prairie all round it for several miles.

Both Fred and Terry knew that if they once got in there it would be extremely dangerous to follow them, hence they made desperate efforts to bring them down before they could reach it; but in spite of all they could do, about a dozen of them succeeded in landing safely and disappearing from sight.

"Some of them must be wounded, Terry," said Fred.

"Yes, of course. Let's go right in and finish them."

"No, that won't do. We'd lose half our men. They are out of sight and would pick us off before we could mix up with them," and with that he called a halt. He had no sooner done so than bullets began whistling around them, and one of the horses was hit. The shots were returned, but Fred ordered the men to cease firing, saying that it was no use wasting any bullets.

"Thunder! Fred. Are you going to let 'em get away?" called out Terry.

"No, but there's no use in losing a number of our men. We'll divide into four parties and surround the timber, keeping out of range and starving them into surrender."

"Well, we'll starve ourselves," said Terry, "we've got no rations with us."

"Not a bit of it. We can send for rations and they can't."

"But they can slip away under the cover of darkness," protested Terry.

"I don't think so. We can close in on them at night, and intercept any of them who try to escape."

"We haven't men enough for that," said Terry, who was extremely anxious to follow them into the timber and fight it out to a finish; but Fred was too cool-headed to risk the loss of a single life, when he believed that his end could be accomplished otherwise.

"We'll send back for Nick Taylor and his men and have them bring rations with them," said he, and a courier was ordered to ride at full speed to Ranchman's Rest for Taylor's command and some provisions.

Then he divided his force into four parties of five or six men each and sent them east, west, north and south of the little patch of timber, telling them to keep out of range of the desperadoes' rifles, and that when night came on they were to creep up under the cover of darkness and thus surround them at close quarters.

Terry again protested, saying that the desperadoes numbered about a dozen and that if they sallied out on one of

the little parties, it would be wiped out before the others could rally to their assistance.

"I don't think they would try that, Terry," said Fred, "but they may abandon their horses and try to slip away through the grass on their hands and knees."

From the timber the desperadoes saw the courier ride away towards Ranchman's Rest, and suspected that he was going after reinforcements. They made up their minds not to be caught in a trap, and at once made preparations to leave the timber as soon as the stars came out.

When they saw their pursuers divide into four parties and go around the timber they were very much relieved. Their leader decided that as soon as it was dark they would make a dash for one of the little parties, and being at least two to one in numbers, hoped to ride them down and thus get away.

Twilight came on, and as the shadows deepened Fred and Terry ordered their men to close in on the timber, thus bringing them closer together.

Fred calculated that they would try to escape by the south side, as it was not reasonable to expect they would make an attempt in the direction of Ranchman's Rest, as that was the danger point for them.

He kept in constant communication with each squad, and when the shadows of night had fully settled down upon them, three of them were within fifty yards of each other on the south side of the timber. Then one of the cowboys crept forward through the grass on hands and knees until he was almost on the edge of the timber. He could hear voices under the black shadow of the trees, but of course could see nothing.

He could catch a few words, and managed to make out that they were preparing for an attempt to get away.

He quickly returned and reported what he had heard.

"Terry," said Fred, "they are evidently going to make a dash on horseback, and, if they do, some of them will get away in spite of us."

"Of course they will," said Terry. "We blundered in not following them into the timber this afternoon."

"Well, it might be a blunder from a military standpoint," replied Fred, "but I would rather every one of them should get away alive, than that one of our boys should be killed."

"Well, we don't know that any man would have been killed. When you go into a fight, each man takes his chances."

"Yes, but where bullets are flying and a lot of men fighting for their lives, the chances are that several will be killed. We were exposed in the open, while they were under the protection of the timber, and only a fool would calculate that none of us would be shot."

"Well, I may be a fool," said Terry, "but we would have finished them anyway."

"Yes, at the cost of a half dozen lives or more, a price I am not willing to pay."

"Well, what are you going to do?" Terry asked.

"We must creep up just as close to the edge of the timber as is possible for us to do so without being seen, and when they come out, attack them before they can mount and make

a dash; yet, after all, some of them may get away, but we will have accomplished our end by breaking up the gang. Those who do get away will make a trail that we can follow after sunrise."

"All right," said Terry.

Fred then ordered the entire party to creep up through the grass till they were within fifty yards of the edge of the timber, where they lay flat down on the ground, waiting and listening.

They could hear voices, and occasionally catch a word or two, and in a little while saw about a dozen horses led out into the open, which of course brought them much closer to Fred and his men. In fact, within fifteen or twenty yards of them. The desperadoes mounted their horses, and the leader spoke in a low tone, saying:

"Now, follow me, boys, and don't stop, no matter what happens."

Quick as a flash Fred called to his men:

"Up, boys!" and in the next breath yelled out to the desperadoes, "stand where you are, or the last one of you will be shot to pieces."

The desperadoes were astounded at seeing upwards of a score of rifles leveled at them in the starlight, and in such close range that escape seemed utterly impossible.

"Don't shoot! Don't shoot!" called out several of them. "We'll surrender!"

Some four or five, however, put spurs to their horses and dashed back into the timber, and a shower of bullets followed them.

The others, though, sat still on their horses, and were surrounded and ordered to dismount and give up their arms.

They thus got seven of the desperadoes.

"Spread out along the timber there," ordered Fred, and Terry with about ten of the men hurried forward right and left to intercept any of the others that might attempt to escape.

The prisoners were bound and guarded by four men, whilst the others went to Terry's assistance.

A little later the boys heard Nick Taylor and his men coming, and Fred sent forward a man with instructions to tell him to spread out and surround the timber to prevent any man from getting out of it.

As soon as he saw that he had drawn a cordon of men around the timber, he called out in a loud voice:

"You fellows may as well come out of there and give yourselves up, for you can't get away."

No response was made, and after about ten minutes he called out again, saying:

"It will be the worse for you if you keep us here all night, for we'll string up the last one of you at sunrise."

"Soy," called out a voice from the timber, "we'll surrender and give up our arms if you will let us go free on our agreeing to leave the state."

"Not on your life!" returned Fred. "We've been ordered to catch you fellows, dead or alive, and we are going to do it."

"All right, then, catch us if you can."

"That settles it," returned Fred. "If you think you can get away, just try it."

Fred then passed the word along the line to the men to keep up a strict watch all night long, and then a profound silence prevailed, which lasted several hours. The men were lying concealed in the grass, none of them daring to rise up for fear of being shot from the timber.

About midnight a fierce hand-to-hand fight suddenly took place on the west side of the timber, between two of Fred's men who had suddenly come in contact with five of the desperadoes, and the others rushed to their assistance.

Fred's boys were afraid to fire for fear of hitting their own friends. There was a mix-up, but it ended in about one minute, when it was found that one desperado was killed and two of Fred's friends wounded. The other four had gotten away in the grass somewhere, and a vigilant search was made for them.

Fred hastened to the spot, and was soon satisfied that the four had succeeded in making their escape on foot.

"Well, four of them got away, boys," he said, "and I guess that's about all that's left of the gang. I consider that good work. They'll have several hours the start of us, but they'll make a trail that we can follow, I guess."

"I'm sorry that we didn't catch the last one of them," put in Terry.

"So am I, but we've done very well," returned Fred. Then turning to the prisoners he asked if there was anyone among them who knew the four men that had gotten away.

"Yes, I know them," said one.

"Very well, then; we'll keep you with us a while."

He then told Nick Taylor to take the prisoners back to Ranchman's Rest, and, early the next morning, deliver them at the jail in Hillsdale.

"Take all the men with you except ten," he ordered, "and with those I'll follow the trail of those four men just as long as it can be seen. Now, who will volunteer to keep on that trail with me?"

"I'll go! I'll go!" sang out nearly every man in the party.

"Oh! that won't do. We don't want the whole crowd to follow the trail of four men. Let every married man return to his home after the prisoners are delivered at Hillsdale, and I'll keep ten single men."

"I'll go with you, Fred," said Terry, and they soon arranged it, after which Nick Taylor and Joe Griswold started off to return to Ranchman's Rest with the prisoners, leaving the provisions they had brought for the use of Fred's party.

"Now, boys," said Fred, "we'll camp here in the edge of the timber, and to-morrow morning search through it to see what we can find, after which we'll follow the trail of those four men."

As soon as the gray streaks of dawn appeared in the East, Fred and Terry, with the other eight men of the party began searching the timber.

They found the horses that had been left by the desperadoes, as well as two dead men, together with three or four rifles.

The single prisoner whom they had kept with them was placed on a horse unarmed.

"Now, my good fellow," said Fred, "all we want you to do is to point out those men to us when we overtake them. You know them and we don't, and if you do what is required of you, we'll turn you loose to go your own way. If we catch you playing us any tricks, tho', we'll set you up as a target, and that will be the end of you."

"All right, sir," said the prisoner, "I'll be glad enough to get away and stay away."

"I'm satisfied of that," returned Fred. "Where did you come from, anyway?"

"Well, I came from Missouri originally, but have been out West here several years."

"Where have you been staying out West here?"

"In New Mexico, round about Albuquerque."

"How did you happen to get into that gang?"

"Several of us came from New Mexico."

"Why did you come to this section?"

"We came looking for work, but not being able to get employment, we had to make a living somehow, and by sticking together thought we could protect ourselves better than by scattering."

The fellow would not admit that he had any knowledge of robberies committed by the gang, beyond occasionally stealing cattle for food, and all the questioning that Fred applied couldn't draw any further information out of him.

They started off on the trail with an old woodsman as guide, who was as keen as a bloodhound in hanging on to it; but when they struck a road, the trail of course, was lost.

"We'll follow the road," said Fred, "for a while. It isn't reasonable to suppose that they would go in the direction of Ranchman's Rest, for they will try to get as far away from there as possible. Keep your eyes on both sides of the road, for they may leave it somewhere."

They followed the road about fifteen miles, and came to a little settlement of some fifteen or twenty houses, where there was a post-office, three or four stores, a stage station, and, of course, a tavern somewhat like that at Ranchman's Rest. Their arrival created a little excitement, as everybody there wanted to know what was up.

"We are looking for four men on foot," said Fred, "who came in this direction."

"No men have come in on foot to-day," said the tavern keeper.

"Are any strangers around here?" Fred asked.

"No; there are always some coming and going, but I don't think there are any in the place to-day."

"Terry, I guess we've lost the trail entirely."

"Yes, I think we have, but I think we'd better stop here till to-morrow morning, for it's a day's travel back to Ranchman's Rest. If we should turn back now, we'd have to sleep on the ground."

"Yes, you are right," said Fred. "There are good quarters here, and our horses need a rest, and we want a little sleep."

The landlord of the tavern had their horses put in the stable, whilst the men went to rooms assigned them, and at once retired to get the sleep they had missed the night before.

They slept till near sunset, when Fred and Terry got up and went down stairs in time to see the stage drive up, filled with passengers, three of whom were women going through farther west.

The passengers took supper there, whilst the stage driver changed horses to resume his trip a half hour later.

Soon after the stage left four men rode up on horseback, dismounted in front of the tavern, went in, took drinks at the bar and asked if they could get any supper.

"Yes, of course," said the landlord.

Fred and Terry were the only ones of their party who were awake. The others still sleeping.

"Fred," said Terry in a half whisper, "I half suspect that those four men are the ones we are looking for."

"The deuce you do! They came in on horseback."

"Yes, I know, but did you notice that one of them is limping?"

"Yes."

"Well, there is a bullet hole in his trouser's leg, and considerable blood all round it. Just go in there and take a look at him."

Fred walked by the four men who were standing at the bar, and from appearances he judged that the man was suffering from a flesh wound in the calf of his leg.

He returned to Terry and whispered to him:

"Go up-stairs and awaken that prisoner, bring him down and let him see those fellows."

Terry went up-stairs and was gone about fifteen minutes, during which time the four strangers went into the supper room of the old tavern. When he came down with the prisoner Fred spoke to the latter and asked him to take a peep at the four men as they sat at the table.

"I don't want them to see me," said the fellow.

"Never mind about that. You take a look at them."

The fellow peeped through the door, saw the four men at supper, and at once nodded his head to Fred.

"Are they the men?" Fred asked in a whisper.

"Yes."

"You are sure of it now, are you?"

"Yes, that man with the black beard is the leader. His name is Knight, and he came from Albuquerque, too, but should it be known that I had betrayed him, his friends in New Mexico would hound me to my death."

"Very well," said Fred, "go back up-stairs to your room, and stay there."

Terry went up-stairs with him, and then proceeded to awaken all the others, telling them to hurry up and come down into the bar-room, after which he returned and joined Fred.

A few minutes later the other men appeared in the bar-room and waited for the four strangers to come in from their supper.

CHAPTER VIII.

A LYNCHING BEE.

They didn't have to wait long for the strangers to come out of the supper room, as the latter were evidently in a hurry to resume their journey. They went up to the bar, paid for their suppers, ordered a couple of bottles to be filled for them, and as they were standing there waiting for the landlord to fill the order, Fred stepped up to the leader and greeted him with:

"Knight, how are you?"

The man wheeled and looked at him.

"That isn't my name," he said. "Who are you?"

"My name is Fearnot, who had a little circus with you last night."

Knight made a movement to draw his revolver, but the next moment Terry and the others had him covered with theirs.

"It's no use," said Fred. "You will either surrender or die right here."

The odds were ten to four against him, and Knight stood there as if rooted to the spot, not daring to move.

"Hold up your hands," said Fred.

None of the four made a move to obey the order.

"Hold up your hands," Fred ordered again, but they still stood immovable.

"You will either die or hold up your hands when I count three," said Fred. "One—two—" and the next instant the four men held up their hands above their heads.

"All right. You have saved your lives. Keep your hands there till further orders," and then he ordered two of his men to search them and take their weapons from them. It was soon done, and then their hands were tied behind their backs.

"What does this mean, gentlemen?" the landlord of the tavern asked.

"It means that these men are arrested by the sheriff of this county."

"Who is the sheriff?" the landlord asked.

"I am," replied Fred.

"The dence you are! I know the sheriff of this county, but I don't know you."

"Well, here are my credentials endorsed by the judge at Hill-dale."

"Oh, thunder! Hill-dale ain't in this county. You are in another county altogether."

"Is that so? Have we crossed the county line?" Fred asked.

"Yes. You crossed the county line more than ten miles back of here."

"Well, we are still in the state, ain't we?"

"Yes."

"That's all right then. We'll take them back to the next county and deliver them at the jail in Hill-dale."

"All right. It's none of my business; but you are a mighty young man to be a sheriff."

"I haven't been sheriff but two days. Was appointed by the regular sheriff after he was shot. Just look at these credentials, and you will understand it."

The landlord looked at the paper, and remarked:

"That's all right."

"Can you take care of them?" Fred asked. "We don't wish to start back until to-morrow morning."

"Yes, you can lock them up in a room, but I won't be responsible for their safe keeping."

"We'll be responsible for that," said Terry.

And after a little more talk Fred ordered the four men to sit down in a corner and a guard was placed over them.

In a few minutes a number of the residents of the village came in, and, on learning what had taken place, became deeply interested. The news spread and in less than a quarter of an hour every man and boy in the place had assembled at the tavern to stare at the prisoners and the boy sheriff who had captured them.

In the meantime the landlord was having a room prepared, where the prisoners were to be kept under guard till the next morning; but before it was ready nearly a score of horsemen dashed up to the tavern and dismounted.

Fred and Terry was apprehensive of an attack, thinking that perhaps the new arrivals were members of the gang, or else their friends, and he whispered to Terry and the others to be on their guard and keep cool.

Pretty soon several of the new arrivals entered the tavern and were greeted by the landlord as personal friends.

"Say," called out one of them to the tavern keeper, "where are the men who came in on those horses out there."

"What horses?" the landlord asked.

"Those hitched to the post outside there. Four of them were stolen from Merrill's ranch."

"Well, there are quite a number here who came on horse-back, and they are in that crowd over there," and he nodded in the direction of Fred, Terry and the others.

The newcomers glared at the others, and a number of them placed their hands on their revolvers.

"Say," said the landlord, "that young man over there is a sheriff and he's got four prisoners."

The spokesman of the party stared at Fred, and the latter stepped up to him, saying:

"I was appointed sheriff of the next county north of here, a day or two ago, after the regular sheriff had been shot. These are my men who assisted in breaking up a gang that had been robbing and plundering in the vicinity of Ranchman's Rest beyond the river for two or three months past, and we pursued four of them to this point, captured them and now have them bound, ready to take back to the jail at Hill-dale to-morrow."

"Well, there were four horses stolen from Merrill's ranch this morning," said the leader, "and we followed their trail to this point, and have found the horses hitched to the posts outside there."

"Point out the horses," said Fred, "and we'll see whether my prisoners are the thieves or not."

A rush was made for the door and Fred accompanied the new party.

The horses pointed out were the ones the prisoners had ridden up to the tavern on.

"I've got the men," said Fred.

"Well, we want them," blurted out several of the ranchmen.

"They are my prisoners," returned Fred. "Come back into the house and I'll show you my credentials as a sheriff, and the men who are with me are my deputies, sworn in for the purpose of breaking up that gang."

There were about twenty men in the party, and they all followed Fred back into the bar-room, where he exhibited his credentials as sheriff.

"That's all right, Mr. Sheriff, but you don't take those men back to Hillsdale. You are not the sheriff of *this* county. We are going to have them, or else there'll be a fight."

"What do you want with them?" Fred asked.

"What a question!" exclaimed the other. "We are going to hang 'em."

Fred was in a quandary. He knew that it was an unwritten law in all the West that a horse thief should be hanged as soon as caught, if his captors were satisfied of his guilt.

The angry ranchmen outnumbered him two to one, and he didn't have sympathy enough with his prisoners to risk a fight in their behalf.

"Look here, now," said he to the leader, "I understand the situation as well as you do, and if I were not here in an official capacity, I would turn them over to you."

"Oh! let 'em have 'em, Fred," blurted out Terry. "I won't fire a shot to save them."

"Neither will I; nor I; nor I;" sang out the others.

"Gentlemen, you are too many for me," said Fred, "I can't fight you single handed; but as an officer of the law I protest against your taking my prisoners away from me."

"Protest, and be hanged!" exclaimed several of the ranchmen, and a rush was made for the prisoners in the corner of the room, who, being bound, were unable to make any resistance.

"See here, Mr. Sheriff," called out Knight, "you are not doing your duty. You've no right to turn us over to a mob."

"I haven't done so," returned Fred, "but they are twenty to one, and I yield to force. I am not willing to be shot to pieces to save you or anybody else."

The grim ranchmen chuckled, and proceeded to hustle the prisoners out of the room.

"Come on, Mr. Sheriff," several of them called out to Fred.

"Excuse me, please," he replied. "As an officer of the law I can't give any encouragement to your proceeding. I protest against your actions."

"That's all right. You stay here till we come back, and we'll all have drinks. Come on and see the fun."

"Excuse me again, please. I want you to bear witness that I protested against your taking my prisoners away from me."

"All right, we will," laughed several of the men, who suspected that Fred was playing a game simply to sustain his reputation as an officer of the law.

Terry actually winked at him, and several of the cowboys who had come with him went along with the crowd to see the lynching. They were gone about an hour, but he and Terry remained at the tavern with three or four of their men till they all returned.

They had taken the prisoners outside of the village and suspended them to a limb of a big cottonwood tree.

They came trooping into the tavern, lined up at the bar and called for drinks.

Fred and Terry, of course, knew what had happened.

"Now, see here," said the landlord, "don't leave those fellows swinging out there for the people of this village to cut down to-morrow morning. It isn't fair."

"Oh! that's all right," laughed one of the lynching party. "Let the crowd bury them."

"Oh! that won't do," protested the landlord. "It's my treat if you'll put 'em under ground before morning."

"All right," yelled the crowd, "set 'em up," and the landlord treated about thirty men on their promise to remove the ghastly fruit from the tree and bury it.

In the meantime a number of Fred's cowboys had told the story of the breaking up of the gang of desperadoes, adding to it a good deal of Fred and Terry's history since they had become ranchmen in the next county, and everyone in the crowd wanted them to drink with them.

They declined by saying that they never drank any liquors at all.

The bar, however, did a land-office business until long after midnight, and the old tavern was crowded to its utmost capacity to take care of the ranchmen and their friends. The ranchmen talked with Fred and Terry and seemed to be very anxious to cultivate their acquaintance, and the boys were not averse to making friends of them. They sang several songs that pleased the crowd immensely, and Terry amused them for a half hour with juggling tricks, after which he and Fred retired to their room upstairs.

"Terry, old man, those fellows down stairs relieved us of a little trouble, didn't they?"

"You bet they did. It's a pity we hadn't a few more of that gang over this way."

"Oh! I knew that was the way you felt about it. I didn't care two cents about their lynching, but of course, as sheriff, it wouldn't do for me to yield without a protest. I was really glad you kicked in the way that you did. At the same time I've always been opposed to lynch law, for it is an old saying that it is better that the guilty should escape rather than one innocent man should suffer."

"No innocent man has suffered," returned Terry.

"No, and I'll say this for Judge Lynch: that he rarely makes a mistake, while at the same time many a guilty man has escaped through technicalities of the law, when defended by able lawyers."

"Yes, that happens every day in the cities all over the country, but the same law never works evenly in different sections. What is best for one section is not always the best for another. The certainty of being lynched if caught, is

the best protection that a man can have out on the plains here."

"There is no doubt of that," assented Fred, "but I'm glad this lynching didn't take place over in our county."

"Yes, that let's us out."

The next morning when they went down stairs, the ranchmen were waiting for a breakfast before starting back to their several homes; and the men and boys in the village were crowding in to see them, for the lynching of four men on the outskirts of the little town was an unusual event for that locality.

"Say, sheriff," sang out one of the ranchmen, "some of your men say that you and your partner are the best shots ever seen in the West."

"Oh! we are not responsible for what other men say," laughed Fred. "We flatter ourselves, though, that we can generally hit whatever we shoot at."

"Well, I'm a good shot," put in one, "and my friends insist that we should shoot at a target and see if you can beat me."

"All right," said Fred. "What sort of a gun do you want to use? Winchester or revolver?"

"We'll try both," was the reply.

And with that the whole crowd went out to the edge of the village, where Fred and Terry gave exhibitions of marksmanship that utterly astonished the spectators.

"It's an easy thing to do," said he to the crowd, "if one is only careful in aiming. A bullet will always go where it is sent. I make it a rule never to pull the trigger till I am sure of my aim."

"Well, the rest of us do that too, and yet we miss," said one of the crowd.

"Of course, but whose fault is it? The manufacturer always tests the accuracy of a weapon before he puts it on the market. Olcott and I have a dozen cowboys on our ranch, each with a Winchester, and we taught them how to use it. When we first took possession of the place we were annoyed by Apaches and white cattle thieves, but in a few weeks they learned a lesson that they have never forgotten, and now, if any of our cattle should go up to one of them and offer to furnish steak voluntarily, the rascals would take to their heels and run away."

CHAPTER IX.

THE TALL BEAUTY AT RANCHMAN'S REST.

After a couple of hours spent at target shooting, the crowd returned to the tavern full of enthusiasm, and again the bar did a rushing business, after which Fred and Terry prepared to start back to Ranchman's Rest.

The lynching party made ready to accompany them, and they rode off together, every man in a merry mood.

During the first ten or fifteen miles, the ranchmen separated here and there returning to their homes, and in a little while Fred and Terry had only their own men with them.

"Now, come ahead, boys," said Fred, "we must ride fast and reach Ranchman's Rest before night. We are not hampered with any prisoners."

"No," laughed some of the men, "but we've had good luck for all that."

"Yes," said Terry, "I think that gang is most effectively broken up, and we ought to celebrate the event with a big dance at Ranchman's Rest on Saturday night."

"Good! Good!" cried the men. "We ought to make a regular holiday of it."

They reached Ranchman's Rest about an hour before sunset, and found Nick Taylor and his men waiting there for them.

"Where are your prisoners?" Nick asked. "Did they get away from you?"

"Yes," answered Fred, "they got clear away, and I guess we couldn't catch them if we spent a lifetime at it."

"What's the matter? Did you lose the trail?"

"Yes, it ended in a little village over in the next county."

"Too bad! Too bad!" said Taylor. "We landed all our prisoners at Hillsdale. The doctor here said the wounded men could stand the trip, so we took them all over there. Some of them may escape punishment for lack of proof, but you can bet they will get out of this part of the state about as fast as horses can carry them."

"That means then that we've cleaned up the whole gang," remarked Terry.

"Yes, that's just what it means."

"What's the matter with us having a dance here Saturday night, then?"

The entire crowd gave a whoop and instantly voted to have it.

"Well, we've got two days in which to get ready for it," remarked Fred. "We'd better stay here to-night, go home early to-morrow morning and get the women folks ready for a regular jubilee."

The landlord was delighted at the suggestion, for it meant hundreds of dollars' worth of business for him in the way of meals and drink.

While the crowd was waiting for supper, some of the cowboys told about the lynching, and a great shout and laughter went up when they heard it. Some of them insisted that it put the drinks on the young sheriff.

"Yes," laughed Fred, "it was a good joke on me, but at the same time it relieved me of a good deal of trouble. I didn't object to the lynching personally, but I protested as an officer of the law."

"Good! Good!" laughed the others.

"Say, Joe," said Fred, turning to young Griswold, "ain't you afraid you'll be lynched when you go back home?"

"No," was the laughing reply, "but I guess I'll get a left-handed blessing."

"Lay all the blame on me. I'm responsible for it."

"Well, let me tell you, that you'll come very near being lynched for keeping me away from home so long."

"That's all right. It wasn't Fred Fearnot, but the sheriff, and I'll resign before I'll go over to your ranch again."

"That's all right," laughed Joe, "I don't know whether my wife will be able to look at it that way or not."

"Don't worry about that," put in Terry. "She'll be so glad to see you that she won't raise any row at all."

The boys had a high old time at the tavern that night, and the next morning started off for home, where they arrived before noon.

The news they took with them reconciled Mrs. Taylor and Mrs. Griswold to the enforced absence of their husbands from home, and when they were told of the coming dance at Ranchman's Rest on the next Saturday night, they began making preparations to attend to it.

Of course, Fred and Terry received great praise for their vigorous measures, and the breaking up of the gang of desperadoes. Couriers were sent to the various ranches, some of them forty miles away, to invite all the families to a great meeting at Ranchman's Rest on Saturday afternoon and evening; and early on Saturday morning over a hundred and fifty people started out for Ranchman's Rest from every direction.

Fred and Terry with half the force on their ranch, reached there at noon and secured quarters at the old tavern for the ladies of Taylor's and Griswold's families; and when the latter arrived, they assisted the girls out of the wagon and led them into the sitting-room of the old tavern.

"Say, Carrie," Terry said, "you see it pays to let Joe get away from home once in a while."

"Yes," she laughed, "I forgive you and Fred with all my heart."

"So do I," said Mrs. Taylor, who had brought her baby along.

"We girls do too," put in Fanny Gardner, "for we used to have such grand times here before those mean men broke it up."

"Well, we are going to have good times hereafter," put in Fred, "for we have taught the rough element that they must behave themselves in the future."

Along in the middle of the afternoon the ranchmen and their hired men held an open-air meeting to pass resolutions of thanks to Fred Fearnot for his splendid work while acting as sheriff, and Fred made a speech to them in which he explained his theory about dealing with evils that afflicted communities.

"The best thing to do under such circumstances," said he, "is to get together and suppress the evil with a strong hand. No use discussing it, or keeping out of the way and letting reckless men run rough-shod over a community. Drive them away or wipe them out at once. It's a severe measure, but a necessary one. In a scarcely-settled region like this, the slow process of law is never effective, and the law-abiding citizens should come to the assistance of law and order, with perfect unanimity and a fierce determination to drive out the disturbers of the peace."

"That's it! That's it!" yelled a score of men in the crowd.

"Yes, it's the only way to do," he continued. "Some of those prisoners at Hilldale will probably escape punish-

ment for lack of proof against them, and a committee of ranchmen should be on hand at the trial to suggest to those who are acquitted that this state is the most unhealthy region in the United States for men of that character; and then I want to make another suggestion to you: that out of respect to the ladies who have assembled here for a pleasant time this evening, no man shall drink enough to make himself drunk, and also to turn in his weapons to the landlord until the dance is over with."

"That's it! That's it!" sang out a number of ranchmen, and the crowd good-naturedly agreed to the suggestion.

After the meeting, the landlord at the tavern was astonished at the number of revolvers that were passed over the bar to him to be taken care of.

"Hanged if I don't wish Fearnot would stay out here all the time," he exclaimed, as he stored the weapons away in different places. "He's got more good sense than the whole crowd of us put together."

The result was, that he never did such a business before on any one evening. Very few men showed the effect of their drinking and everybody was in a good humor, took supper in the dining-room and no disturbance whatever occurred.

The landlord's wife had procured assistance and enough was provided for all. Everybody seemed willing to help, and as soon as it was possible to do so, the big dining-room was cleared of tables and the dancing began.

Fred danced first with Mattie Griswold. Next with Fanny Gardner, then with Nellie Griswold, after which he insisted that the landlord's wife should be his partner in the next dance; and as he waltzed around the room with her, he kept the crowd in a roar by hugging and kissing her.

Of course, Terry made no end of fun, for he was never in better humor. It was impossible for either him or Fred to dance twice with the same girl, for it seemed that everyone present wanted at least one dance with them.

"Say, Fred," said Nick, after the dancing had been going on for an hour. "You remember that Carrie wanted us to go up the river to visit our new neighbors a short while ago?"

"Yes," said Fred.

"Well, they have just arrived here. They lost their way for three or four hours. I thought the Griswolds would bring them down with them, but they merely sent an invitation for them to be here, and the eldest daughter of the family is what I call an extraordinary beauty. She's over six feet tall, a blonde, and a splendid figure. I want to introduce you to her."

"Yes, of course. Where is she?"

"She's in the crowd back there with Nellie Griswold. Her name is Miss Snyder," and he made his way through the crowd at the lower end of the room, showing his way along to where the young lady was surrounded by a crowd of cowboys and ranchmen, and several girls.

He introduced Fred to her. He made one of his best bows and expressed his gratification at making her acquaintance.

"I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Fearnot," she replied, "for

since we reached here I haven't heard anybody else talked about."

"Thank you," he replied, "I have been fortunate enough to make a good many friends out here, and all of us gladly welcome you as a neighbor. Will you honor me with the next dance?"

"Yes, with pleasure," she replied, and he extended his hand to her. She placed hers in it, and as she arose to her feet, towered more than six inches above him.

As he led her out on the floor, every eye was riveted upon them. She was actually taller than any man in the room, and, of course, a woman naturally looks taller than a man of the same height; but notwithstanding that, her movements were graceful in the extreme, and to Fred's astonishment she danced with an ease and grace that he had never seen exhibited by any woman in that locality.

Before they had made two circuits of the room in the waltz, she remarked:

"You dance better than any gentleman I've met in this part of the country."

"Thank you. I learned how to dance in the East," he replied, "and I suspect that you did also."

"No, I learned to dance in Paris, where my father lived several years. We've only been four years on a ranch."

"Ah! indeed! How do you like life in the West?"

"I didn't like it at first. I thought it extremely monotonous, but I believe I'm growing perfectly wild, for I've learned to ride like a cowboy, shoot, throw the lariat, and am really fond of the excitement and of rounding up cattle, and the wild, free life of the wild West."

Just then an awkward dancer stepped on her skirt, and a ripping sound was heard. She exclaimed in French:

"Oh! the awkward gawk!"

"It was an accident," said Fred, in French also.

"Oh, dear! Do you speak French?"

"Yes, German and Spanish, too."

"Then please wait until I pin up that rip," and he conducted her back to where the Griswold girls and Nellie Gardner were standing, where she borrowed several pins, which Carrie Griswold used in repairing the garment, and all the time an animated conversation went on in French between her and Fred.

"Why, what in the world are you two talking about?" exclaimed Carrie, who had never heard French before.

"Oh! we are talking secrets," she laughed.

"What language are you using?" Nellie Griswold asked her.

But just then Carrie had finished her task and the tall beauty seized Fred and went waltzing away with him.

Fred was really charmed with her. She had a dash and vivacity about her that made her quite irresistible. She frankly told him that he was the first gentleman she had met in several years that knew how to dance.

"Oh, my partner, Olcott, is a better dancer than I am," he replied.

"I don't see how he can be."

"I'll introduce him to you, and you can judge for yourself."

"Really, are you anxious to get rid of me?"

"No, indeed. On the contrary I am worrying about the possibility of your becoming tired of dancing with me."

"Then don't worry," she replied. "I'd like nothing better than to dance every set with you."

"Really, I hope you don't wish to imperil my life that way?"

"Imperil your life? Will it kill you to dance the rest of the evening with me?"

"No, it would add ten years to my life to do so; but there are a score of other young men in the house who would shoot me if I were to monopolize your society in that sort of way."

"Oh! no," she laughed, "you can flatter as well as you can dance, I see."

"My dear Miss Snyder, you don't seem to be aware of the sensation your presence here has created. If you'll take the trouble to glance around the room, you will see every young man gazing at you in rapt admiration."

"Oh; that's because I'm the tallest one in the house," she laughed. "People have always stared at me, and I've often cried over the fact that I'm a feminine physical monstrosity. It isn't so much admiration as curiosity, and my father has even hinted to me that if I went East to some of the museums I could command a large salary as a freak."

"You won't be offended with me if I speak to you frankly, and accuse me of flattery, will you?" he asked, as they went waltzing gracefully around the room.

"Oh! no," she laughed.

"Then let me tell you that your height and beauty harmonize better than any I ever saw in my life, and I have been all round the world. It is a rare thing to find a very tall beauty. The most beautiful women of the world have been of short stature, but with you it is entirely different."

"I have been told that before, but I am not in the least susceptible to flattery, for it is the great sorrow of my life that I am so tall."

"You are not offended with me, I hope?" he asked.

"No, indeed. On the contrary I'm highly pleased with you. I heard Miss Griswold say that you were a splendid singer, and I'm going to insist on hearing you sing before we leave here this evening."

"Thank you. Olcott and I will sing with the greatest pleasure, but really you are not going to return home to-night?"

"No. Mr. Griswold secured quarters for us here."

A little later the music ceased for a while and he led her to a seat, where she was quickly surrounded by men and women, five or six rows deep.

Terry was introduced to her, as were a number of other young men, and she had a smile and pleasant word for everyone. She was the belle of the evening; in fact, a decided sensation.

"Mr. Olcott," said she, addressing Terry, "I am extremely anxious to hear you and Mr. Fearnot sing."

"All right," said Terry, "I'll do anything in the world you ask me to."

"Thank you. You'd better not make such a promise as that," she laughed.

"That's all right. I'm hypnotized, and whatever you order I'll be bound to do."

She laughed heartily, and Fred at once began tuning a violin, for none of the musicians present were able to play for the songs that he and Terry sang.

"What a pity we haven't a piano," she remarked.

"Yes," assented Fred, "but Terry and I are just as much at home with the violin."

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

After Fred had tuned the violin to his satisfaction, he started off playing the prelude to a well-known operatic air, and a few moments later he and Terry began to sing.

Everyone in the room seemed to hold his or her breath for fear of disturbing the flood of melody that filled the room.

Miss Snyder looked at them both in evident astonishment, for she not only recognized the fact that they had good voices, but that they had been well cultivated also; and she looked from one to the other in evident admiration until the song was finished; then evinced the greatest enthusiasm in applauding them when they ceased singing.

"Oh, what a treat!" she exclaimed. "Please sing again."

They started another air, and before they had finished one verse, she joined in with them in a voice of surprising sweetness and volume, and in turn Fred and Terry plainly showed how much they were surprised, and as soon as they finished they bowed and threw kisses at her, regretting they had no flowers.

She laughed, blushed and remarked that she was passionately fond of music.

"Can you sing 'Sweet Home?' " she asked.

"Yes," replied Fred.

"Then let me have the violin, for that is my favorite above all songs."

"Do you play?" Fred asked, as he handed her the instrument.

"Yes," she replied, and she began playing with a skill that was marvellous in execution.

They sang the grand song through, and the crowd seemed to be spellbound as they listened.

"Oh, how beautiful! How beautiful!" she exclaimed, as the last note of the famous song died away.

Every eye in the room was riveted upon her because of her beauty and remarkable skill with the violin.

"Play that again, please," said Terry, "and we'll give you a new version of it."

She instantly began playing, and again the grand melody of the song filled the room; but in the second verse Terry began showing symptoms of emotion, and Fred saw at once that he was going to turn it into a farce with which he had

so often captured the crowd. He began whimpering, yet kept on singing, and as she played, the tall beauty gazed at him with amazement. His whimpering developed into a cry, and in the last verse he fell on the floor, roaring and bellowing like a great lubberly boy whose emotions had gotten the best of him. The crowd couldn't understand it at first, but they nearly raised the roof when they saw him on the floor and listened to his great sobs and exclamations of grief. When it ended, she dropped the violin in her lap, and gave way to a fit of laughter that became almost hysterical.

It was a decided sensation, but the tall beauty seemed to be utterly unconscious of everything but the humor of Terry's performance, and as soon as she could control her risibles, she asked for a repetition of it, and, of course, they had to comply. She had most extraordinary control of herself, played the air through to a finish, barely smiling the while. Then she gave vent to her enjoyment by a series of silvery peals of laughter that would have shocked the ladies of the four hundred in New York City beyond expression.

"Mr. Olcott, I want to dance with you," she said, as soon as she could control herself sufficiently to speak.

"Well, if you don't I'll cry again," he replied, and he led her out on the floor whilst Fred seized one of the landlady's daughters and followed them.

She found Terry as good a dancer as Fred was, and declared that she was willing to live all her life on a ranch if she could have the pleasure of occasionally dancing with them.

"Thank you," said Terry, "it's worth a hundred mile trip on foot to dance with you, and if you'll keep the dogs tied up, we'll run over every few days with a violin under our arms to see you."

"The dogs shall not hurt you," she laughed, "and you needn't bring any violin with you, as I have a fine one of my own, flute and guitar, and as soon as one can be brought from my former home, I will have a piano. My father and mother play and we have music every day and evening in our home."

"Say," said Terry, "I'm afraid that Fred and I will neglect our business loafing around you."

"No danger of that. I'm fond of business myself, and if you will let me know when you want to round up your cattle, I'll ride over and help you out."

When the dance ended, Terry led her to a seat again, and remarked to some of the cowboys that she was the best dancer he ever met.

"Yes," said another one, "she's the greatest beauty ever seen in this part of the country."

It was long after midnight when the dance broke up, by which time many of the girls from the ranches had become very jealous of the tall beauty, in spite of her kindness, absence of self-consciousness, and her extremely friendly manner with them.

Out in the bar-room a score of the men made themselves drunk, drinking to her health.

The next day being Sunday, the girls slept quite late, but

when they met about ten o'clock in the sitting-room of the old tavern, they seemed to be none the worse for the late hour and exercises of the evening before.

The tall beauty greeted the other girls with a kiss, complimented them on their rosy cheeks and bright eyes after keeping such late hours.

After a late breakfast, they prepared to return to their homes. The Snyders had come in a wagon, but Miss Snyder expressed a wish to ride horseback, and Fanny Gardner let her have her horse and saddle, taking her place in the wagon.

"Oh! thank you," she exclaimed, "it is so kind of you. I assure you I appreciate it. I want you to come over and spend a week with me, or two weeks, or a month. This horse won't buck, will he?"

"Well, he never did with me," replied Fanny, "but you are a great deal heavier than I am, and I don't know whether he'll object to the load or not."

"Well, I'm not afraid of a horse," she laughed, "but it would be awkward to be pitched out of the saddle and laughed at," and with that she dashed off at a sweeping gait, followed by Fred, and soon they were a half mile ahead of the others.

Terry wanted to follow also, but he thought it was his duty to remain with the other girls.

In a little while Fred and Miss Snyder were almost out of sight of the wagon.

"Say, Fanny," said Terry, "that looks like a runaway match, doesn't it?"

"Yes," she laughed, "but if she captures Fred, it's more than any other girl has been able to do."

"She's a most extraordinary girl," said Terry.

"Yes, she's very beautiful," assented Fanny. "I believe they are going right straight to your ranch."

"Well, if they do, I'll send your horse over to-morrow; but what's the matter with you driving over our way and take dinner with us?"

"Oh! that won't do," said Nick's wife. "We must get home just as soon as we can on account of the baby."

"Well, Joe will have to come around our way," remarked Terry, "as he won't lose any distance by doing so."

After a while the Griswold and Taylor parties separated, and the former went on with Terry to Fearnot's ranch. When they reached there, Fred and Miss Snyder were fully an hour ahead of them. He was showing her through the house, the barn and the stables, and she was feeding the turkeys and chickens.

"Isn't it a shame that two such young men should be permitted to live the lives of bachelors on a place like this?" she said to Mattie and Nellie Griswold, as they were assisted from the wagon.

"They are very obstinate boys," laughed Fanny. "They seem to be afraid to marry for fear they will lose some of their liberties."

Mrs. Wilson, the house-keeper, assisted by the girls, soon prepared a substantial dinner for them, and Mr. and Mrs. Snyder reached there in time to join them at the meal. They took a great fancy to Fred and Terry, and the elder Snyder

accompanied the latter over the premises, inspecting the barns, stables and the men's quarters, and asked a great many questions about their system of cattle raising.

He then invited them to come over to his place and make some suggestions for its improvement.

"We are only seven miles away," he remarked. "Just a short ride."

"Thank you," said Terry, "we shall be pleased to do so, but let me assure you that any day in the week, month or year that you feel like coming over to see us, you will meet with a cordial welcome. We have ample room and would like nothing better than to entertain all of you for a month at a time."

When they were about to leave, Miss Snyder took her seat in the wagon with her parents, leaving Fanny Gardner's horse there to be sent over the next day.

"Say," said Fred, "you are not tired of the saddle, are you?"

"No, indeed," she replied.

"Then why not try one of my horses? We have three ladies' saddles here, and some of the finest saddle horses to be found anywhere in this country."

"Thank you, I will, if you will ride with me."

"Just what I was hinting at," he laughed.

She arose and leaped down to the ground from the wagon, saying:

"Drive on, father. We'll get home ahead of you, even though you have an hour's start of us."

Her father laughed and drove off, but before they reached the river ford, Fred and the tall beauty overtook and passed them. They forded the stream, which was about a foot higher than when Fred had last crossed it.

She had to take her foot out of the stirrup in order to avoid touching the water, and on reaching the other side, Fred suggested that they wait there till the wagon had crossed, for fear her father might need directions how to keep in the shallowest part.

"If it was two feet higher the wagon might be swept down stream," he said.

They waited there some fifteen or twenty minutes, and when the wagon appeared on the south side, Fred gave directions until they were safely across. Then they dashed on ahead for about three miles, when they reached her home.

She insisted on his dismounting and going into the house, where she had a seventeen-year-old brother and two younger sisters. She introduced him to them, and then proceeded to entertain him with music until her parents arrived.

By that time the day had waned until scarcely two hours of sunlight remained. Her father pressed him to spend the night there, but he declined on the ground that his business had been neglected for a week past, until his presence was absolutely necessary on his ranch.

When he went out to his horse, Miss Snyder accompanied him, and as he shook hands with her, she looked him in the face and asked:

"When will you come to see me again?"

"Very soon," he replied, "for I enjoy your music very much, indeed."

"And I enjoy yours also," she returned, "and more than that, I appreciate conversing with you more than any gentleman I ever met."

"Thank you, I feel highly flattered," he returned, "and I assure you that I shall ride over again just as soon as I can find a chance to do so; and not only that, I want to have you ride over my ranch, see our cattle, and then return here for a few hours' enjoyment with music and song."

"I shall expect you," she replied. "Our meeting is an unexpected pleasure, and I am sure that other meetings will be still more pleasant."

He pressed her hand, sprang into the saddle, and dashed off towards the river at full speed, whilst she stood there at the gate gazing after him until he had disappeared from sight, wondering at the marvelous circumstances of one

so young acting as a sheriff and breaking up a desperate gang of desperadoes.

THE END.

Read "FRED FEARNOT BAFFLED; OR, OUT-WITTED BY A WOMAN," which will be the next number (80) of "Work and Win."

SPECIAL NOTICE: All back numbers of this library are always in print. If you cannot obtain them from any newsdealer, send the price in money or postage stamps by mail to FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 24 UNION SQUARE, NEW YORK, and you will receive the copies you order by return mail.

From Fred Fearnot's Friends!

Uniontown, Pa., March 24, 1900.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir:—Inclosed find fifteen cents and one officer's coupon, for which please send me one Fred Fearnot medal and a blue silk badge and membership certificate. I want a President's badge. I have organized a "Work and Win" Club. Willie Desellems, president, and Clyde Ringer, secretary. There are ten members in all. In behalf of "Work and Win" I think it is the best weekly published for young and old. I will remain, yours, Willie Desellems.

We are glad to hear from your club, and wish it success. Stick to "Work and Win," and you will always be pleased.

Meridian, Miss., March 26, 1900.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir:—I have been wishing for a long time to write you a letter, but I send you these verses instead:

The very best book in all the world
Is the book called "Work and Win."
For every boy and every girl
To read it is no sin.

Fred, Evelyn, Terry and the rest
Make a team that's hard to beat.
I read their adventures with zest,
And they certainly are a great treat.

I have taken the book for many a week,
Its place can't be filled by another,
And of Fred Fearnot I'm glad to speak,
Because he loves his mother.

And when he becomes a man,
Fred can thank the God above,
As o'er the past he scans,
For the gift of a mother's love.

Now, all boys listen to me:
Always obey your mother,
For her place, do you see,
Can never be filled by another.

And when she leaves this world
To live with God above,
You all will happier dwell,
If you've felt a mother's love.

Hoping that you will find a place for the above, I remain, very truly yours, a subscriber, F. C. R.

Your verses are very creditable, both for construction and for sentiment. We hope that you and all the readers of "Work and Win" will bear them in mind

Norwich, Conn., March 27, 1900.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir:—Inclosed find fifteen cents for medal and President's badge. I have formed a club called "Work and Win." There are eleven members now, but more are going to join, so you may expect more orders for badges. Please send mine as soon as possible to my address. We are all fond of "Work and Win," and intend to read it to the end. Please excuse my writing, as I am in a hurry. Good-by. Harry Simonds, 283 Laurel Hill ave.

We wish your club success and an increased membership. We are glad that you all like "Work and Win," and hope that you will stick to your determination to read it as long as it lasts.

Versailles, Ohio, March 29, 1900.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir:—I can say this for dear old "Work and Win," that it is the best book that I ever read. I have read many other stories, and I think "Work and Win" beats all of them. I think Fred Fearnot and Terry Olcott are fine characters. I hope Fred and Evelyn will get married soon. I don't think that a better story can be written than the "Plot to Catch Aguinaldo; or, Fred Fearnot in Kaffirland." Yours truly, A. M. Speelman.

We are glad to receive such a pleasant letter, for it proves that "Work and Win" still holds the field against all comers, and will continue to do so. We hope that you will long remain faithful. It will be a long time before Fred is married.

Connotton, Ohio, March 31, 1900.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir:—Inclosed please find three two-cent stamps for one of your Fearnot and Evelyn medals. As I read "Work and Win," I think I am entitled to one. I think "Work and Win" is a fine weekly for young people and old alike. Wishing "Work and Win," Mr. Standish, Mr. Tousey, Fred, Evelyn, Terry, Mary, and all their friends happiness and long life, I remain, a faithful reader of "Work and Win." Yours truly, C. E. Trushell.

Thanks for flattering opinion of "Work and Win." Mr. Standish, the publisher and all concerned return best wishes. You certainly ought to have a medal and we trust that you are well pleased with it.

Little Rock, Ark., March 26, 1900.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir:—Being in a poetic mood the other day, I took pen in hand—or I should say my pencil—and I now send the result. Mr. Hal Standish certainly deserves credit for his remarkable faculty in presenting such life-like characters. Any boy or girl who reads the noble "Work and Win" cannot help being made better by the lessons set forth by that masterful creation of Mr. Hal Standish's pen. Wishing you good luck in the future, as you have had in the past, I remain, one of your most ardent admirers.

A TRIBUTE TO WORK AND WIN.

The wind roared in the rafters and heavy was the rain.

The thunder crashed, the lightning flashed through the window pane:

The midnight hour was past, the town in slumber lay.

While good folks slumbered peacefully, waiting for the day.

In one lone house there glimmered a solitary light:

While all was dark and gloomy, it seemed warm and bright.

What means this single light? What a mystery deep?

Why should one be still awake when all the town's asleep?

Upon a bed so cozy, with a lamp beside her head,

A young girl lay enraptured over a book she read.

She cared not for the hour, nor of the time of day:

Her thoughts were upon distant things, and they were far away.

What book was this that magic spell had cast upon the girl,

That still she read though midnight had long passed in a whirl?

Creep close and look and you will read upon the printed page,

The name of that great story which now is all the rage.

Its pages tell of Fearnot, and the many scrapes he's in:

It is the best book published, the noble "Work and Win."

Hoping to see this in print, I remain, one of "Work and Win's" most ardent admirers, Anna Ellner, 423 E. Second st.

Your verses evince considerable poetic talent, and we are pleased at the implied compliment to "Work and Win" as clearly expressed. Mr. Standish sends best regards. We trust you will always enjoy "Work and Win."

Kansas City, Kan., March 28, 1900.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir:—Inclosed find three two-cent stamps and one coupon for a Dewey badge. I have been a constant reader of Fred Fearnot's adventures, and praise it to the utmost. "Work and Win" is one of the most interesting books I ever read. I have read them from the first to the last. Hoping to receive an early reply, I remain, yours truly, A. F. Medocks, 25 Central ave.

All our readers find "Work and Win" deeply interesting, and if they read one they want to read all. We trust that you are pleased with your medal.

Fergus Falls, Minn., April 1, 1900.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir:—Inclosed please find ten cent stamp and one member's coupon, for which please send by return mail "Work and Win" medal and membership certificate. I am, respectfully yours, C. E. Hooland.

P. S.—I have read the "Work and Win" for a long while, and they are about as good as can be. Long life to them.

Start, but satisfactory. "About as good as can be" is really high praise. We hope that you are equally satisfied with the medal.

St. Joseph, Mo., March 27, 1900.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir:—I have been reading "Work and Win" from No. 1 up to the present time, and I think they are the best out. Fred and Terry are all right, and so is Terry's sister Evelyn. I hope Fred will marry her, and I would like to see Terry fall in love with Marguerite. Your friend, Raymond Helsey.

"The best out" is high praise. There is no hurry about either Fred or Terry getting married for a long time yet.

Boone, Ia., March 28, 1900.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir:—Inclosed please find fifteen cents, for which send me a medal, badge and certificate. We have formed a "Work and Win" Club here, as we are all ardent admirers of your paper, and as soon as we get everything arranged we will send in an order for members' badges. I think Mr. Standish is a very interesting writer, and I also take a great deal of interest in Fred and Evelyn. Yours respectfully, E. W. Flack, President.

Your club is No. 80, and we wish it all success. Let us hear from you now and then. We trust that you are well pleased with the medal and badge.

Utica, N. Y., March 31, 1900.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir:—Inclosed find five two-cent stamps and coupon for a Fred Fearnot and Evelyn medal. "Work and Win" is the best book I can get in Utica. Fred and Terry are brave American boys. I must now close. Yours truly, Robert Ezard, 43 Lafayette st.

You might well say that "Work and Win" is the best book you can get anywhere, for it is a fact. Fred and Terry are all right, as you have found out. We trust that you are satisfied with the medal.

Cadonia, N. Y., April 1, 1900.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir:—Inclosed please find ten cents and one member's coupon, for which you may send me by mail one "Work and Win" medal, and also a membership certificate of the "Work and Win" Club, and you will oblige me very much. As for "Work and Win" I think that it is the best book I have yet read. Long live Hal Standish and "Work and Win." Yours truly, Royal L. Sanders.

"The best book I have yet read" is high praise, but you are not likely to find a better. Mr. Standish returns the compliment. We trust that you like the medal.

Everson, Pa., March 30, 1900.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir:—Some time ago I wrote to you expressing my opinion about "Work and Win," published by yourself, and I have decided to add a few remarks to my opinion of this popular weekly. I must say they are most excellent books, and the reading matter in them grows more interesting every week. None of us can give them too good praise, for they certainly deserve all we can extend to them. As I said in my last letter, they cannot be beaten, and we hope they never will. In September, 1899, we organized an "International 'Work and Win' Association of Correspondence," which was to extend throughout the world. Our membership grew rapidly, and is yet more rapidly increasing every week. Our officers are: George Abington Mathias, 810 Warner ave., Peoria, Ill., president; Benj. S. Baldwin, box 71, Everson, Pa., secretary; Goldie M. Smith, 1001 Washington st., Tampa, Fla., first vice-president, and Isabelle T. Maxwell, 105 Park st., Carbondale, Pa., second vice-president. We have members in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia, Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, Texas, Florida, Cuba and England. We also have State consuls in several of the States, but we would like to see our membership increase more in 1900 than it did in 1899. Our association is open to all who may wish to join, no dues being charged and no entrance fee taken. We especially ask the girls and young ladies who read "Work and Win" to join us. Already we have about twenty young ladies in our association, besides many young gentlemen. All who wish to join will please apply to me or our president for application blanks, which are furnished free of charge. Hoping to see this published, and that your books will have success, I remain, your friend, Benj. S. Baldwin.

We are very glad to hear that the International Association is progressing so well, and wish it increased success. Thanks for good opinion of "Work and Win," which means much coming from such a source. Thanks also for kind wishes.

South Boston, Mass., April 1, 1900.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir:—I am a constant reader of "Work and Win," and think it is the best five-cent book I have ever read. Talk about other weekly story books, they are trash compared with "Work and Win," and I, for one, send my best wishes to Mr. Hal Standish for his fine work. I cannot say too much about it. Hoping I will follow Mary's and Evelyn's examples, and that "Work and Win" will live forever, and wishing long life to Fred Fearnot, I am, a constant reader, Agnes E. Baxter, 178 II st.

Thanks for high opinion of "Work and Win," which is most gratifying. We echo all your wishes, and hope that you will long continue to be a reader of "Work and Win," and that you are well pleased with the medal.

Mason City, Neb., March 31, 1900.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir:—Inclosed find ten cents in stamps, with coupons, for which send me one Fred Fearnot and Evelyn Oleott medal. The "Work and Win" books are the best five-cent novels published, and you are the best publisher out. Evelyn, Fred and Terry are fine young people. I have read all of "Work and Win," from No. 1 to No. 63, and will continue to read them as long as they are published. I would like to see Fred organize a football team, but would rather see him married to Evelyn. Hoping to see him married soon, I close. Your faithful reader, Harry Walker.

Thanks for praise of "Work and Win" and its publisher. We trust that you will always be of the same opinion, and read every number that comes out. Fred will not marry for a long time yet. We trust that you are pleased with the medal.

Hagerstown, Md., March 30, 1900.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir:—I have been buying "Work and Win" ever since it first came out, and will buy them as long as I can get them. Now, I see that you have got out a "Work and Win" medal, with Fred Fearnot and Evelyn on it, and I want one of them. Please send me one. Yours truly, George R. Myers, 215 High st.

We are glad that you like "Work and Win," and hope that you will always do so. We trust that you are equally pleased with the medal.

St. Louis, Mo., April 1, 1900.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir:—I take great pleasure in writing you these few lines to let you know I think a great deal of Fred Fearnot, and also of Terry and Evelyn. I have read "Work and Win" from the first, and I think a great deal of them, and will continue to read them. Inclosed find ten cents for a "Work and Win" medal and a membership certificate of the "Work and Win" Club. I remain, yours truly, Jake Eberts, 2131 Bismark st.

Your few lines contain a great deal of praise, and we are well pleased. We trust that you will long be a reader of "Work and Win," and that you are well pleased with the medal.

Marion, Ind., April 2, 1900.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir:—Find inclosed ten cents in stamps and coupon, for which send me one Fred Fearnot badge. Having read your books, I am satisfied in saying they contain some of the best stories written for the price. We boys are organizing a "Work and Win" Club here, and would like to have information on the subject. We want to know whether you charter the clubs or not. If so, please state in your answer. Yours truly, Donald C. Gossett, 2906 S. Washington st.

You might add that "Work and Win" contains some of the best stories written for any price. No, we do not charter the individual clubs, but will send you a certificate of membership to the general association of "Work and Win" Clubs, and give you a club number. Read instructions on second page of cover. We hope that you are pleased with the medal.

Grand Rapids, Mich., April 2, 1900.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir:—Inclosed find stamps and coupons, for which please send me two officers' medals and two badges, one for president, the other for secretary. Yours truly, Otto Bechtold, 520 Fourth st.

P. S.—I have been a constant reader of "Work and Win," and think it is the best of them all. I have a club, which formerly was called the "Melrose," but which I changed to "Work and Win."

"The best of them all" is the highest praise. We feel quite complimented by your changing the name of your club, which is now "Work and Win" No. 81. We wish it all success. We trust that you are well pleased with the badges and medals.

Ironton, Ohio, April 2, 1900.

Mr. Frank Tousey—

Dear Sir:—Inclosed please find one officer's coupon and fifteen cents in stamps, for which please send to me one membership certificate and "Work and Win" medal, and a blue silk badge with the word President on it. "Work and Win" is the best paper out, and I am glad to say so. I have read from No. 1 to No. 69. Hoping to hear from you soon, I am, yours truly, Lee, Bushman, Tenth st. and Maple ave.

"The best paper out" is most flattering and we are glad that you think it is. We trust that you are pleased with the medal and badge.

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